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**Examining Black Middle-Class Women's Experiences of Marital Conflict and
Intimacy**

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Abstract

When a man and a woman get married, a marital story begins. The plot is determined by its characters (husband, wife, children, relatives and close acquaintance's) and setting this includes their home and surrounding community, the plot gets dark and conflict is triggered when the duo holds different views on how certain things should be done. For this project such conflict was assessed by the intersections of race, class and gender. Through a narrative analysis and Intersectional framework, the experiences of Black middle-classness, marital conflict and intimacy were examined, amongst eight women from Gauteng. The findings of the study show that Black middle-classness is differentially understood and is thus heterogeneously experienced. Furthermore, marital conflict occurs when expectations of traditional gender roles are not fulfilled. The study furthermore revealed that marital conflict alters the discursive dimension of intimacy in relationships.



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1 Introduction

“The first-class antagonism which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamian marriage, and the first-class oppression with that of the female sex by the male” (Engels 1988 :17).

Marital Conflict as experienced by Black middle-class women alters the practices of relationship intimacy. Tyler Perry’s *Why Did I Get Married?* is used in this current study as a starting point to assess whether similar or contrasting class - conflict and intimacy issues are experienced from those espoused in the film, in a South African context. Perry’s *Why Did I Get Married?* portrays the ramifications of class identification within a marriage context and unveils overwhelming economic and domestic expectations amongst married Black middle-class couples (Perry 2007). The film also demonstrates the continuance and or discontinuance of various aspects of intimacy, amid marital conflict.

The current study aimed to understand Black middle-class identity by assessing how it is conceptualised by the participants of the study who self-identified as belonging to the middle-class category. Furthermore, the role of class in marriage was also evaluated via an exploration of the types of conflict Black middle-class women found themselves in. The study also focused on examining the resolution and reactions to conflict. Intimacy is an integral component of marital life and as such, the study also investigated the experiences of discursive, emotional, caregiving and disclosure aspects of intimacy in the presence and absence of conflict

1.1 Background

I developed a personal interest regarding the issue of Black middle-class women and their experiences of marital conflict and intimacy, not only because of Tyler Perry’s *Why Did I get Married?* This interest was also fuelled by unanswered questions I had concerning the now dissolved marriage of my paternal aunt. Furthermore, through eaves dropping on conversations held by family members about the dissolution of my aunt’s marriage, the causes seem to be attributed to the on-going infidelity and domestic abuse that was eminent in her marriage and other underlying issues.

My aunt earned more money than her husband, who eventually got retrenched and was unemployed for a while. The family members often neglected the discussions about money matters in their marriage and always emphasised the fact that he was too abusive and that she had to leave him to spare her life. However, the money matters may not be separated from the assessment of their situation. Research on marital conflict suggests that arguments over money occur more frequently compared to other kinds of disputes (Dew 2011).

When he was unemployed, my aunt's husband remained at home and took the responsibility of doing the domestic chores. I noted that, little is mentioned by the relatives about the implications of being a stay at home husband in a social context that looks down upon a stay at home father. Stanley and Einhorn (2007) argue that the division of domestic work may hold emotional ties that can be a source of conflict for marriage and can be associated with gender inequality. After the second wave of feminism, more women found work away from home. The involvement of women in the public work became a source of conflict for some households. One of the reasons is that traditionally, women have had more responsibilities at home and with them in the labour market they are often over-whelmed with balancing work-life responsibilities, as such was the case in my aunt's household (Faulkner, Davey, and Davey 2005). My aunt totally withdrew from household duties, and what followed was a reversal of traditional gender roles. She was bringing home the bacon whilst he was cooking it.

Amato (2010) is of the notion that when a wife works it means that new domestic work arrangements need to be made to ensure that responsibilities are still carried out. These discussions regarding the new arrangements in terms of the division of labour at home may trigger conflict, especially if the husband has rigid traditional beliefs about gender roles. Moreover, even though a wife's contribution to the family income can improve a household's financial position, it can also increase the wife's awareness of the decision-making power that comes with financial power (Amato 2010).

Thus, the dissolution of my aunt's marriage appears to be a result of power contestation, intermingled with financial and gender issues. Conflict over finances can be about power issues (Jenkins et al. 2002; Shapiro 2007). For example, when a spouse decides without consulting the other to save money using family income (Dew

2011). Such a conflict may on the surface be about the effects of the decision but on a deeper level, it is about the power imbalance such actions reflect. This then suggests that issues over finances can provoke issues of relationship equity and power. However, currently this is only an educated guess as to what could have been the causes of the above-mentioned divorce. I am therefore left with a series of unanswered questions regarding marital conflict and intimacy which have inspired this study.

I was also interested in knowing about the unfolding of intimacy both in the presence and absence of conflict. This curiosity is induced by a memory of the events that took place after a specific episode of conflict between my aunt and the husband. My aunt came and stayed at our house for a while. During this time, whenever her husband called what followed was her shouting and crying over the phone. After some time, she avoided any type of communication with him. This occurrence got me wondering about the unfolding of discursive intimacy. Hence in this study I explored the dimension of intimacy, known as discursive intimacy.

For example, on one occasion, my aunt offered to take me to school whilst she was staying at our home. At that time, she had been staying with us for two weeks. On the way to school she stopped the car and started crying uncontrollably. After she stopped crying, she explained that no matter what she does, she just cannot seem to forget or remove the love she has for her husband, despite all the physical and emotional pain she has been through. The recollection of that memory sparked interest in investigating the experiences of emotional intimacy. I therefore investigated how women feel about their husbands during a conflict and how they feel about them after that event has taken place.

Even though she was temporarily separated, my aunt was still worried about the husband's financial needs being taken care of, as she was the provider. She still sent him some money and paid his rent. That occurrence motivated me to study another aspect of intimacy, which is care and attention, provided during and after conflict.

1.2 Rationale and Problem Statement

South African studies on the Black middle-class have been growing since 1994. These studies look at the language of class among the Black middle-class in Soweto (Phadi and Mando 2010), consumption patterns of the Black middle-class (Makhotsho 2009) and the precarious position of the Black middle-class (Khunou 2015). All these studies have made a significant contribution to our understanding of the Black middle-class in South Africa. However, none of them examine the Black middle-class and relationship conflict and intimacy simultaneously.

Again, many studies undertaken on the Black middle-class rely heavily on quantitative methods and do not employ the narrative approach to decipher the phenomenon from the perspective of women (Khunou 2015:94). The only research that pays attention to women's experiences and understandings of middle-class is Phadi et al. (2011) on her Sowetan study as well as Khunou (2015). This limitation influenced my decision to pay attention to women's experiences of middle classness.

This study focuses on the narratives of South African Black women only. In omitting the voices of men from this study, I am not on a conquest of gender discrimination nor do I have radical objectives that posit for the removal of male voices from knowledge production. Rather, I am drawing on the logic of advocating for equality as provided in Nelson Mandela's famous speech captured in his biography *Long Walk to Freedom* of having fought against both Black and White domination and advocating for neither to be pushed in the forefront (Mandela 1995). In this case, the argument is less about (but not ignoring) racial equality, rather it is for the promotion of gender equality. Thus, including the narratives of women only is one way of fighting against patriarchal domination not with the intention of replacing it with a feminist take over, but for reaching a gender equilibrium concerning knowledge production. The starting point is then producing more knowledge about women, by a woman, for all mankind, and once enough has been produced then the inequalities of the past in terms of the argument of female inclusion and exclusion in knowledge production will be redressed (Kirsch 1999).

Furthermore, the reason for omitting men's voices draws on the standpoint theory which states that people who occupy marginalised positions in society obtain a double perspective (Kirsch 1999). Subsequently, they understand the workings of both the dominant culture in this case (men) and their own marginal one (women) (Kirsch

1999:16). Thus, based on that premise, women can offer more insightful experiences on issues in and around Black middle-classness, marital conflict and intimacy (Kirsch 1999: 16). Lastly, to summarize, women's voices have been incorporated so as to add on to the body of existing feminist literature.

Furthermore, South African literature on marital conflict is more focused on identifying the causes of divorce and domestic violence (Amoateng and Richter 2003; Seabi 2009). There is, however, a glaring knowledge gap on examining the situations that contribute to conflict in the first place. There is thus a need to conduct an inquiry on issues that lead to arguments and eventually to conflicts in marriages. This study intends to close that gap, by investigating the topics that couples have argued about in their marriage. Studies have shown that relationship conflict impacts intimacy (Tolurunleke 2014 and Hamilton 2013). Therefore, this study not only attempts to understand marital conflict, but also how intimacy processes are affected in times of tension.

Black marriages are going through immense hardships because of marital conflict. Marital conflict has devastating consequences for individuals within the family undergoing such conflict. Effects of marital conflict on child development are that they may contribute to poor academic performance, school truancy and psychological disorders (Cummings and Davies 2002). Effects on the marital spouses are poor health, increased stress and even marital breakdown (Hamilton 2013). In South Africa today, the rate at which marital couples experience divorce is startling. The number of divorce cases increased by 0.3 % from 25 260 granted in 2015 to 25 326 of those granted in 2016 (Lange n.d). This observation placed a burden on me to carry out this study.

1.3 Research Questions and Objectives of the Study

This study researched experiences of conflict and intimacy among Black middle-class women. Thus, the research questions for this study are: How do Black middle-class women conceptualise middle-classness? What situations contribute to intimate relationship conflict as experienced by Black middle-class women? And how does intimacy unfold in times of conflict?

The objectives that guided the study are:

- (1) Investigate the subjective notions of the meaning of the Black middle-class concept,
- (2) Investigate what situations trigger conflict,
- (3) Assess the responses to conflict,
- (4) Examine the strategies used to resolve conflict and lastly
- (5) Explore what happens to intimacy during and after marital conflict,

1.4 Main Concepts of the Study

1.4.1 Black Middle-Class

There is consensus amongst scholars that the definition of middle-class is broad and complex (Burger, Steenekemp, Van der Berg and Asmus; Zoch 2015; Khunou 2015; Phadi and Ceruti 2011). Sociologists and scholars define it differently. Karl Marx for example, distinguished this class as the petty bourgeoisie, which includes managers, small business owners and artisans (Marx 1867). For Weber, the emergent middle-class are those without land or property, those in white-collar employment and those with skills, credentials, specialised knowledge acquired through educational certificates (Weber 1961). The concept of class has evolved much since the writings of Marx and Weber, but occupation, education, shared life chances, wealth and income are vital factors to definitions of class (Burger et al. 2015). The evolution of the term is attributed to context. For the interests of this study, it is imperative therefore, to conceptualise the term Black middle-class from a South African perspective.

South African literature depicts various understandings of the concept of Black middle-class. The Black middle-class have been identified as Black diamonds; an elite group popular for lavish living (Krige 2011). Local terms that distinguished them from other Black groups in their adoption of White preferences are o-excuse me, coconuts and ama-model C (Southall 2016). Schlemmer (2005) further demonstrates the heterogeneity of the Black middle-class by distinguishing between core and lower Black middle-class. The core middle-class comprises of professionals, managers distinct from the lower middle class, consisting of modestly remunerated workers such

as teachers and nurses. These conflicting findings suggest that there is a need to further seek more understanding of the term Black middle-class.

1.4.2 Marital Conflict

Marital conflict in this study is understood as disagreements and arguments between husband and wife as explained by Gottmans (1979) model of explaining marital conflict. He divided each conflict marital interaction into three stages. Stage one is agenda building. Here the couple present their views. Stage two is the arguing stage, where both partners attempt to persuade each other on adopting their respective positions. Stage three is marked by negotiation, whereby compromise is the aspired objective. Marital conflict can also refer to physical fighting between husband and wife, often identified as wife battery, domestic violence and physical abuse in literature (Seabi 2009). However, this study did not intend to focus on experiences of domestic violence but rather on verbal conflict which manifests as arguments and disagreements.

1.4.3 Intimacy

For the purpose of this study the working definition of intimacy will be that proposed by Zelizer (2005). She states that:

“interactions within them depend on particularized knowledge received, and attention provided by at least one person, knowledge and attention that are not widely available to third parties, the knowledge involved includes such elements as shared secrets, interpersonal rituals, bodily information, awareness of personal vulnerability and emotional closeness” (Zelizer 2005:16)

This definition allowed me to explore intimacy in the marital arrangement as multi - dimensionally and includes (1) *communication* that is discursive intimacy, where the choice of words used, tone of voice and the body language used by couples during and after conflict was inquired about. Additionally, I investigated how communication changes if at all it changes during and after conflict, (2) *attention provided* ,this factor considers the amount of attentive care and care-giving that happens in a relationship (Zelizer 2005:16) and was similarly explored to find out how attentive care played out in the midst of conflict, then the examination of (3) *shared secrets and disclosure*

(trust), as it has been indicated that the more couples confide in one another and share such things as secrets, fears, private matters, it makes the bond between the two stronger and lastly, (4) *emotional closeness* was investigated. That is how members belonging to the marriage feel about one another and their attachment bond after a quarrel.

1.5 A Brief Note on the Methodology

This study employed the qualitative narrative approach (Webster 1996). The narrative approach is qualitative research that relies on the participants narrating of non-fictional stories (Berger and Quinney 2005). Through purposive sampling and snowballing, the researcher selected 8 Black married and divorced women in or who were in heterosexual marriages, between the ages of 30-65 who self-identified as middle-class, for interviewing. The methods used to elicit the narratives were a narrative interview guide in conjunction with vignettes containing images of couples from Tyler Perry's *Why did I get Married?* The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The narrative data analysis method known as structural and content analysis was adopted (Lieblich, Tuval-Mushiack and Zilber 1998).

I wrote this study in the first person through the use of "I" so as to establish authorial presence (Ying Ling Cheung 2012 :748). Furthermore, the use of I is to affirm my post-positivist stance, embrace subjectivity and subsequently my epistemological and ontological positions (Campbell and Wasco 2000).

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is conducted within an Intersectional theoretical framework. Intersectionality is a contemporary feminist theory (May 2015). The core of the theory understands that women are oppressed by intersecting social identifiers and social systems (Ritzer, 2008:481). Race, class and gender do not operate as isolated elements in South African society, despite the habit of treating them as such. Sociology researchers, therefore, are faced with the intricate task of studying them more intently. Consequently, in this study I attend to that responsibility by examining how Black women experience middle-classness and marital conflict, considering the

intersections of gender, race, ethnicity and employment status through the lens of Intersectionality.

Ritzer (2008) explains that these intersections change the experience of being a woman. Black middle-class women for example, experience the intersection of patriarchy, race, class and gender. This study was interested in seeing how this intersection manifests in marital conflict. The argument in Intersectionality is that it is the intersection itself that produces a particular experience of oppression, and one cannot arrive at an adequate explanation by using an additive strategy of gender, race class and sexuality (May 2015). Furthermore, Intersectionality understands these arrangements of inequality as hierarchal structures based on unjust power relations (May 2015). I used Intersectionality to assess how women are either privileged or oppressed in the marriage institution.

1.7 Organisation of the Report

Chapter two provides the literature review which includes a brief historical overview of the Black middle-class, to enlighten the reader on who the Black middle-class were in apartheid South Africa and who the Black middle-class are, presently. As the system of governance changed from apartheid to democracy, there were also shifts in understanding Black middle-classness, shifts that left those in the class in uncertainty about their class position, and left many with the question who are the middle-class? In an attempt to address the question, various conceptions and approaches that seek to define the term middle-classness will be presented, to show the complexities of understanding middle-classness in South Africa today. In the process of demonstrating those intricacies, it is imperative to discuss the lifestyle of those belonging to the group as these are significant to account and assess for in-depth understanding of their identity. I then introduced Intersectionality as the theoretical framework that was used to analyse women's experiences. The chapter was closed with an exposition of experiences of intimacy in the context of marriage and conflict.

Chapter three provides a detailed discussion of the qualitative methodology, methods, procedures and design that were employed in conducting the study. The research design draws from the principles of narrative research.

Chapter four argues that Black middle-classness is a heterogeneous and precarious position to occupy. It is argued that the varied experiences of being middle-class emerge from differential earning levels and in turn this creates different levels of affordability. Furthermore, it is shown that the Black middle-class women of this study sought advancement through education, migrating to suburban areas and material acquisition.

Chapter five addresses the objectives of what situations contribute to conflict and identifying the responses and resolution strategies in Black middle-class marriages. It is argued here that conflict in marriage emerges as a result of power contestation. Moreover, it is argued that similar social issues such as infidelity, alcohol abuse and emotional abuse are experienced by the participants of this study as in the Tyler Perry's *Why Did I Get Married?* Lastly, the chapter shows that emotional and discursive intimacy are altered by conflict. However, the demonstrations of care-giving and physical intimacy remain unaltered even in spaces of conflict.

Chapter six provides the conclusion of the study and final remarks.



2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This review of previous studies examines some of the findings reported on the Black middle-class, marital conflict and intimacy. Furthermore, this review is guided by the objectives of the study and is thus written in four sections that address the following questions: How has the scholarly literature portrayed the experiences of the Black middle-class in South Africa within specific time periods and socio-political spaces? What situations have previous research identified as triggers of marital conflict? Finally, how has the literature presented the experiences of relationship intimacy in the context of domestic conflict? Lastly, the chapter provides an overview of Intersectionality as a theoretical framework underpinning the study.

Since one of the objectives guiding the study is to investigate the subjective notions of the Black middle-class concept; the review is opened by accounting on definitions of the Black middle-class term from previous studies. Then the chapter provides a historical overview of the Black middle-class. The relevance of a historical overview is that it assists in addressing the question of who are the Black middle-class, by tracing the Black middle-class from Apartheid South Africa to the present day. This overview demonstrates that Black middle-class is a dynamic and complex concept that shifts and alters with context and time.

Next, the review moves to grappling with the theme of marital conflict. Discussions here focus on identifying factors that contribute to marital conflict mentioned by the literature. This will then inevitably lead to a section on mentioning the responses and resolution of conflict. Thereafter, the chapter explores the impact of conflict on experiences of intimacy in the marital relationship. These experiences will be assessed through the following components of intimacy: discursive, emotional, physical, attention-provided and disclosure.

The intersections of race, class and gender contribute to men and women experiencing marital conflict and intimacy differently. Few scholars attending to the topic of marital conflict and intimacy account for this Intersectionality overtly. I

therefore, dedicate the final section of the review to an explanation of Intersectionality as both a theory and a methodological category.

2.2 The Black Middle-Class

Middle-class is not a term that can be defined or understood with ease (Phadi et al. 2011). One of the reasons is that the term reflects the social context of those claiming the identity. This, therefore, suggests that people will have different conceptions of it, as prescribed by their varying geographical spaces, and socio-political time (Phadi et al. 2011). The complex nature of Black middle-classness is even seen in differing determinants employed by academics and researchers in studies of class.

These categories and approaches differ (Burger et al. 2015). Examples of differing approaches used by South African researchers are an occupational skill measure, a vulnerability indicator, an income polarisation approach and subject social status. Furthermore, Western (quantitative) research indicates the following three quantifiable variables: education; homeownership and occupation as a means of categorising people according to class (Marsh; Thomas and Johnson 2005). Contemporary South African studies as in (Phadi and Manda 2010; Khunou 2015) have critiqued the above-mentioned determinants as limited and thus emphasized the need to extract further meanings of class from lived experiences.

Academic definitions of middle-classness are limiting. For example, in Khunou(2015) Aganang's response suggested such a limitation on class categorisation by raising significant questions in her response when asked to participate in a study of the Black middle class. Her response which was delivered as a series of questions inevitably showed the absent variables in existing conceptualisations of Black middle-classness.

Aganang responded as follows:

"Do we (blacks) belong to a different middle class from other racial groups? If the class division is highly determined by finances, where does social way of life fit into all this? What drives the classification of people as middle class? Is it resources, way of life, occupation? What about all the other kinds of wealth that is not classifiable in the Western sense. Simply put where does the Western and non-Western approach meet here?" (Khunou 2015:95)

This response suggests that in conceptions of class, the variable of race, needs to be considered, together with the social way of life which I interpret to be the culture of a people. The question: “What drives the classification of people as middle class?” (Khunou 2015:95) calls for attention on understanding the power dynamics involved in class categorisation. That being so, who gets to decide the criteria that is to be adhered to when seeking to classify people? Aganang’s response further draws attention to political issues that need to be heeded to in attempts to conceptualise the Black middle-class in mentioning the West (Khunou 2015:95). This suggests that we academics, need to think about wealth from a Western perspective and Wealth from a South African perspective and give them equal acknowledgement, in determinants of class categorisation. New Insights therefore can be generated by using self- identification as a measure for class because lived experiences can reveal gaps, silences and narrow mind-sets (May 2015).

Black middle-class is differentially experienced by those claiming to occupy the category. For example, when two men were interviewed by Phadi et al. (2011) at Soweto they defined the middle class as follows: “Middle class... means we can afford stuff. We can afford to go to the movie or a restaurant in the middle of the week” (Phadi et al. 2011: 89). A salesman interviewed in the same locality (Soweto) when asked the same question stated: “I am working and I can get all the basics of life ... The middle-class to me is everyone who is working ...” (Phadi et al. 2011:89).

These two lived experiences display different understandings of middle-class from respondents residing in the same township. The men at the festival are of the view that to be considered middle-class one must be enabled to afford more than the necessities of survival, that is one must afford wants or luxuries such as going out for meals. The salesman’s response contrastingly equates middle-class with the status of being employed and affording the basics. Overall, these dichotomous views further demonstrate that middle-class is a relative term.

2.3 Privilege and Education

Studies have portrayed members belonging to the Black middle-class as privileged. For example, in Krige (2011) a group of Black middle-class men known as the Castle

Light Crew from Soweto, reached consensus that the term referred to well-off Black families. Again, the study understood the Black middle-class to be more meticulous, educated and wealthy in contrast to the lower working-class of the township (Krige 2011). The Black middle-class were also privileged during high apartheid in South Africa (Mabandla 2013). The variables that contributed to their success was exclusive education, that was of a higher standard than the Bantu Education that was allowed most Africans under high apartheid. Secondly, for those that were entrepreneurs, there was an absence of White competition in business areas in the homelands and Bantustans. Thirdly, international pressure on the state to lessen imposed restrictions of African trade and business in urban areas contributed to the Black middle-class privilege (Southall 2004:250; Makhotsho 2009:10).

Much of the privilege accessed by the Black middle-class has its genesis in the formation of Christianised communities by the missionaries in Kwa-Zulu Natal. These communities were known as the amakholwa (believers) (Southall 2016). The believers lived on mission-owned land which was geographically separate from non-Christian neighbours. A significant component that enabled the believers to be more privileged from the African working class is the fact that numerous missionary societies granted individual titles to land to dedicated converts (Southall 2016).

Black middle-class privilege can also be connected to the initiative of Christian Missionaries to civilise African societies. To achieve that undertaking, the Missionaries had to first promote literacy in English. These missionaries came from the West (Southall 2016). Thus, the Black middle-class styles of grooming, eating mannerisms and life goals were infiltrated with Western ways of being (Southall 2016). Therefore, it is seen that most vital privilege available to the believers was access to education, especially for those aiming to flourish. Black Middle-Class parents have been known to move their children from Black schools to urban multi-racial schools (Chipkin 2012). Black South African parents' social mobility came with the advancement of removing their children from Black schools to multi-racial schools. Busisiwe first goes to school at Boleka, a commercial college in Rosebank in Johannesburg and then to Waverly Girls High, a public school in an upmarket White suburb (Chipkin 2012). Busisiwe's parents insist that she gets a good education. Busisiwe shares her experience:

“It was very difficult ... there weren’t a lot of black kids in multiracial schools [...]. My parents were very old and they just wanted me to get the best education and they didn’t care about friendship stories” (Ibid, 23/6/2009 in Chipkin 2012).

In a similar fashion, her own son goes to St David’s Marist Brothers College, in Sandton, an exclusive private boy’s school situated in one of the most affluent suburbs in Johannesburg (Chipkin 2012). Therefore, these experiences show that social mobility and privilege for the Black middle-class can be indicated by moving from Black Schools to White Schools. Moreover, the education gained by the Black middle-class enabled them to access privilege as it opens doors for better paying jobs required by both capitalism and the colonial economy.

2.4 Employment of the Black Middle-Class

Black middle-class members from pre- and post-apartheid periods have occupied work in professional vacancies (Burger et al 2015). Research indicates that consensus has emerged regarding what occupations constitute the middle-class (Burger et al 2015). These include White-collar occupations such as managers and clerks (Southall 2016). Some members belonging to the Black middle-class however, are self-employed entrepreneurs and farmers (Mabandla 2015). In the past decade, economic strategies such as Black Economic Empowerment, Affirmative Action and tenders have contributed to much of the economic development of the Black-middle-class.

Research on future goals of the Black Middle-Class further emphasise the importance of profession and professional success of this group (Ungerer 1999). A study conducted on the emerging Black-middle class future goals indicated that these goals are related to career aspirations: 37.0% want senior positions, 29.5% aspire to be entrepreneurs, 8.2 % wished to enter a profession, whilst the remaining 25,3% wanted other goals (Ungerer 1999: 101). Therefore, it is evident that career and businesses are important features in Black middle-classness.

2.5 Challenges of the Black Middle-Class

Black middle-class members are victims of debt. Research indicates that at the first quarter of the year 2000, just under 60% of South Africans’ disposable income was sourced through debt (Prinsloo 2000:21). Consequently, a number of South Africans are battling to pay off their debt, nonetheless consumption remains high. However,

this is not true for all middle-class South Africans. Research on savings of the Black middle-class further revealed that South Africans belonging to the middle-class were found to have a higher debt culture in comparison to countries such as China and India (Cronje et al. 2010).

Saving is a challenge for most Black middle-class members because of various factors. Cronje et al. (2010) attributes the debt to the following three factors: demographic trends, income inequality, and financial liberalisation. The combination of all the above contribute to high debt and high consumerism. Sadly, the consumption patterns of the Black middle-class have been narrowly understood as high materialism of the Black middle-class (Krige 2011).

Since the Black middle-class have been reported to engage in conspicuous consumerism a challenge incurred by this group is distorted representation as greedy consumers (Krige 2011; Khunou 2015). This conceals the role of rational economic drivers of consumption expenditure and Black history (Burger et al. 2015). Therefore, further research that seeks to understand not only their motivations for spending, but their experience holistically is necessary

Thus, it is important for scholars and analysts to decipher that the negative depiction in media and research because of the consumption patterns has historical roots. The consumption of the emerging Black middle-class is embedded in the fact that previously they could not afford or access the material acquisition because of apartheid laws and policies that restricted and confined Black economic power for the majority of Africans (Makhotsho 2009). Research indicates that purchases of the emerging Black middle-class include items such as cars, tv's, computers and a microwave to catch up on an asset deficit caused by a history that disadvantaged them (Burger et al. 2015).

2.6 Attributes of Marital Conflict

This section accounts for the situations and factors that lead to marital conflict. The organisation of these causes is presented as follows: marital conflict and class sensibilities, marital conflict and financial matters, marital conflict and work-life balance, marital conflict and religion, marital conflict, and alcohol abuse.

2.6.1 Marital Conflict and Class Sensibilities

Marital partners from different class backgrounds can find themselves in conflict because of clashing class sensibilities. In a study conducted by Streib (2013) it was suggested that different class sensibilities amongst marriage partners can lead couples to feel misaligned. Spouses with white-collar origins want to carefully manage their time whilst those with blue-collar origins are disposed to a more laissez fair approach, this causes conflict. The latter supports the claim that where there are class differences conflicting world views exist.

Furthermore, the earning potential of middle-class members determines their taste and preferences. Research states that these sensibilities are embedded in one's childhood class position (Bourdieu 1984). Class conditions yield patterns of taste, and these gradually relate with binary positions. Bourdieu (1984) discerned that the lower classes tend to possess what he called vulgar taste, whilst the higher classes tend to possess refined taste (Streib 2013). Conflict therefore occurs when one partner prefers for the vulgar and the other for refined taste.

2.6.2 Marital Conflict and Financial Matters

Different views on financial matters can cause marital conflict. Research states that spouses that are stringy often marry spenders. These opposing money orientations contribute to frequent conflict (Rick, Small, and Finkel 2009). Dissatisfaction when one spouse is criticised for how he or she spends money can also result in conflict (Rick et al. 2009). Research has indicated that women report that disagreements about money last longer and often reoccurred; additionally, husbands report more anger on topics related to finances (Rick et al. 2009).

Furthermore, financial disagreements may also be related to power and gender issues. Disagreements over finances can be disagreements about power and control issues (Shapiro 2007). For example, diary research using a small number of married couples in Australia showed that most financial arguments related to recent decisions; decision-making power was an issue in these arguments (Kirchler, Rodler, Holzl and Meier 2001.) Thus, financial issues can provoke larger issues of relationship equity and power.

When arguing about money, the communication between husband and wife can be destructive. Studies have shown that financial disputes are linked to primitive emotions that stimulate negative conflict tactics, due to the symbolic meanings they attach to money such as success, security and power (Zelizer 1994; Shapiro 2007; Jenkins et al. 2009). Thus, if there are contradicting beliefs about the symbolic meanings of money and its use between spouses, it is likely that they may utilise destructive conflict tactics to address disputes over money.

2.6.3 Marital Conflict and Work-Life Balance

Research indicates that married mothers with professional careers generally experience work-family conflict pressures more compared to working fathers (Tichenor 2005). Kalliath et al. (2011) contends that if a professional working woman is perceived as being ambitious about her career goals, she bears the risk of being accused of neglecting her prime duty of family care. Married mothers encounter the burden of commitment to their professional work-roles, whilst simultaneously attempting to prioritise their family responsibilities (Kalliath et al. 2011).

Social studies identify the phenomena described above as work-life balance (Clark 2000 and Nieslan Survey 2011). Work-life balance is defined as an employee's awareness that various domains of personal time, family care, and career are integrated with a web of role conflict (Clark 2000). Research states that working and married female participants, globally, are pressured for time (Nieslan Survey 2011). Moreover, women must consistently negotiate unsatisfied roles to meet all the roles in their life. Role strain has related to conflict in dual-career marriages (Kalliath et al. 2011).

2.6.4 Marital Conflict and Religion

Religious differences can be an area of conflict when the spouses are from different religious affiliations. Radebe (1983:110) explains that religion is not merely a set of beliefs, but a way of living and thinking. When there are differences it causes conflict in the family and may cause marriage failure as adjustment to each other becomes challenging. Furthermore, research has shown that interreligious marriage challenges the stability and smooth functioning of the family (Sewenet, Tessagaye and Tadele 2017). Topics that could be discussed without conflict become a source of conflict. For example, deciding which religion the children will adopt becomes a source of conflict

(Sewenet et al. 2017). Additionally, the children encounter religious identity problems. Moreover, parents find it difficult to socialize their children on either side of the religious groups (Sewenet et al. 2017).

Also, despite the challenges interreligious marriages has on the children's socialisation, these marriages often are a result of great dissatisfaction. Research findings showed that inter-faith marriages have higher divorce rate, as much as nine times higher than other marriage combinations (Sewenet et al. 2017). Therefore, this indicates that differences in religion cause marital conflict.

2.6.5 Marital Conflict and Alcohol Abuse

Men, whose identity is more dependent on the financial provider role, find themselves abusing alcohol during periods of economic hardships and this causes family conflict (Courtenay 2000). In a study conducted in Macedonia for example it was found that men frequently used alcohol to avoid stress associated with low or no income. The high cost of alcohol has negative implications for the family budget as the remaining money can no longer accommodate all the household expenses (Courtenay 2000). Such alcohol abuse inevitably leads to conflict within the household.

Research indicates that there is a relationship between excessive alcohol consumption and intimate partner violence (Leonard and Eiden 2009). The binge drinking of some men contributes to acting violently against women. These violent acts include hitting, stabbing, and pushing (Leonard et al. 2009). In contrast to the latter, the relationship between women's drinking and intimate partner violence has not been confirmed, however verbal aggression and hostility has been reported amongst women that abuse alcohol.

2.7 Responses to Conflict

There are negative and positive responses to conflict. Aggression and shouting during conflict are negative. Conflict responses characterised by anger forecasts increased occurrence of divorce (Gottman 1991). Such responses destruct the overall health of the marriage (Gottman 1991). Positive responses to conflict on the other end include listening, calmly discussions, negotiation, and compromising. Mutual constructive communication is described as a communication process that involves discussing matters in a positive manner aimed at solving the problem; it avoids aggression and

irrational reactions (Sadeghi, Hezardestan, Ahmadi, Bahrami, Etemadi, Fatehizadeh 2011).

Conflict can also cause others to be speechless and walk-away from a troubling situation. That conflict response known as demand-withdraw. This conflict communication style is dysfunctional as it occurs when one partner demands to talk about an issue while the other person withdraws or refuses to talk about it (Christen and Heavey 1990). This pattern emerges in instances whereby one partner tries to get closer while the other attempts to maintain a distance (Christen et al. 1990). This style contributes to deterioration of intimacy.

2.8 Resolving Conflict

Once a conflict presents itself within a marriage, the couple must manage it using resolution strategies. Resolution strategies are interpersonal actions used in relationships to manage and resolve disputes (Marchand 2004). The most effective of these strategies are advantageous to self and others, ensuring harmonious relationships.

Collaborating is the most effective conflict resolution strategy as it satisfies both partners' concerns (Marchand 2004). In a harmonious relationship, spouses can clarify their expectations through talking. They can express personal thoughts and feelings, which strengthens feelings of intimacy. They will feel free to openly address issues that concern them. They also tend to be collaborative in their conflict management (Marchand 2004). Therefore, working with each other and not against each other can yield positive results that produce a win-win situation.

Understanding the other party's viewpoint is a strategy for settling conflict. Research supports the notion that couples can use their disagreements to gain understanding and solidarity (Jenkins, Stanley, Bailey, and Markman 2002). Conflict, therefore, has the potential to create greater cohesion between spouses, moreover, being less egotistic and creates spaces of harmony as do fundamental principles, particularly respect (Jenkins et al. 2002).

The intervention of mediators can contribute to solving marital conflict. Mediators can range from family, counsellors, and friends (Malunga 2006). Furthermore, wives were

less troubled and closer to their husbands after the confiding interaction. This indicates that it may at times be necessary to involve neutral third-party members to assist in resolving marital conflict (Spaumer 2017).

Sadly, some conflicts are never resolved. Jenkins et al. (2002) suggests that marital disputes need to be resolved because, those that are not will simmer and eventually escalate to a larger problem. Furthermore, withdrawing from the conversation does not resolve the issue. Thus, marital conflict needs to be resolved as the failure to do so will contribute to the reduction of marital happiness (Jenkins et al. 2002).

Letting matters go and not following up on a matter has been one way of solving conflict. The findings of Malayan couples on avoidance indicated that a greater number of husbands (42%) were high on avoidance behaviour compared to wives 34.7%. Husbands had avoided the face-to-face discussion of thoughts and feelings with their wives and were most likely to let their wives take the responsibility of solving the problem. Avoidance is a negative resolution tactic because it merely delays the issue for another day.

2.9 Intimacy

Intimacy provides contentment and happiness in marriage (Robbles, Slatcher, Trombello and McGinn 2014). Intimacy in marriage is indicated by optimal relationship functioning whilst the absence of intimacy is indicative of a poorly functioning marriage (Umberson, Williams, Powers, Liu, and Needham 2006). Intimacy is essential in marriage because it draws the couple closer to each other (Khunou 2012). Since the objective of this study is assessing the various dimensions of intimacy, a review of previous studies on intimacy is provided below.

2.9.1 Physical Intimacy

In his best-selling novel entitled *The Five Languages of Love* Dr Gary Chapman (1992) explains that physical intimacy is a way to communicate emotional love to one's partner. He beautifully explains that whatever there is of a person resides within the individual's body and therefore to touch the body is to touch the person (Chapman 1992). Therefore, if that is the premise then to withdraw from touching a spouse's body

is to distance oneself from one's spouse. To illustrate this, in our society shaking hands is a way of communicating openness to others. If one man refused to shake hands with another, it would suggest that things are not right in the relationship (Chapman 1992: 82). Similarly, in marriage withdrawing touch is an indication that there is something wrong.

Physical intimacy is very important to men in relationships (Gordova, Gee, and Warren 2005; Gaia 2002). In Gordova et al. (2005) all the men agreed that sex is something that distinguishes an intimate relationship; however, the differences lay on its significance. A respondent in Gordova et al, (2005) felt that sex could make or break a relationship. Interestingly the participants in Gordova et al. (2005) differentiated sex from experiencing intimacy. That is sex can happen without intimacy, but intimacy could not occur without emotive affection Gordova et al. (2005).

2.9.2 Discursive Intimacy

Discursive intimacy understood as communication between spouses is an important aspect of relationship building in marriage. Research indicates that women's communication styles differ from those of men (Netshitangani 2008). The findings show that women employ communication strategies that lean towards interdependence, co-operation and peace whilst men engage in communication tactics that are based on aggression, independence and competition (Netshitangani 2008). Marital conflict has also been reported to create disharmony in communication (Dew 2011).

During arguments, communication between spouses is ineffective as each one is concerned with voicing out their concerns. Gottman, (1994) posited that this competitive type of communication during conflict occurs in unhappy and insecure relationships. In addition, the exchange of competitive behaviours results in prolonged arguments such that pessimism becomes the constant ambience of the relationship (Gottman 1994). Talking over each other could potentially lead to the exchange of harassing expressions.

Effective communication that creates intimacy is possible during arguments. Research has proven that effective communication happens when couples vent out their

concerns instead of yelling about them (Madison 2009). Madison (2009) further explains that good communication includes understanding when one should talk and when one should listen. Interrupting your partner during an argument is an indication of a lack of respect for their opinions (Madison 2009). Even though listening is significant in communicating, it is not automatic. It has to be done intentionally at all times (Pelt 2008). Thus, listening builds discursive intimacy in intimate relationships.

2.9.3 Intimacy and Attentive-Care Provided

Marital partners that help each other with responsibilities at home and personally can strengthen intimacy in their marriage. Doing things for one's partner is a language of love (Chapman 1992). Acts of services are defined as those things that one does for their significant other, because they know that doing such things for their partner is greatly appreciated (Chapman 1992). A service lover does things to seek to please one's partner by serving them. These acts of service include domestic household obligations that include cleaning, laundry, cooking, and home maintenance services. Furthermore, if done willingly, they are considered as expressions of love. They are acts of genuine love, more so, when they are done even during times of conflict.

To forgive one's partner during conflict is considered an act of care. Forgiveness lessens aggression and fosters intimacy following conflict (Eaton and Strutters 2006). Moreover, forgiving one's partner enhances commitment in the relationship and promotes constructive communication (Fincham et al. 2004). Forgiving one's partner promotes peaceful and effective conflict resolution (Fincham et al. 2004).

2.9.4 Intimacy and Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure begins when spouses confide with the other about sensitive issues. This process builds intimacy when the spouse being told accepts the information (Reis and Shaver 1988). The importance of revealing oneself to a partner has been associated with the development of close and satisfying marriages (Reis et al. 1988). These findings suggest, married couples need to disclose more about themselves to their partners for them to feel close.

2.10 Theoretical Framework: Intersectionality

Women experience marital conflict differently. To assess the differential oppression and experience of marital conflict amongst women, I used Intersectionality as an interpretive framework in assessing the lived experiences of marital conflict from the perspective of women. Intersectionality enabled me to expose how subjection and dominance manifest in the institution of marriage (May 2015:4). A principle feature of Intersectionality is showing how women experience repression in varying ways (Ritzer 2008). Thus, in chapter 5, I show how the interchanging and overlapping intersections of race, gender, class in power systems of religion, patriarchy and Black culture contributed to the emotional and physical abuse of women in marriage. The sites of oppression made visible in Chapter 5 and the resistance emanating from it was often the cause of marital conflict.

Kimberly Crenshaw holds that Intersectionality is heuristic in nature:

“it is akin to a prism to be used to amplify and highlight specific problems particularly by drawing attention to dynamics that are constitutive but generally overlooked or silenced” (Crenshaw 2011:229-232).

She argues that for one to know Intersectionality one has to do Intersectionality (Crenshaw 2011). The heuristic approach compelled me to attend to its problem-solving capacity, one that was contextual, focused on obliterating injustice. In chapter four I argued that to expect Black middle-class women in the labour force to be the sole domestic care providers and do all domestic duties is unjust. In concluding Chapter 6, I proposed that traditional gender roles for men and women in marriage need to be reconstructed to fit the present-day context, whereby both husband and women are providing. I extend the argument in Chapter 6 by adding that for justice and fairness to prevail in families, work needs to be equally divided.

The heuristic approach furthermore required me to slant towards unrecognised knowers in knowledge production whilst concentrating on experience as a source of knowledge and interrogatively persist in “asking questions, incrementally and continuously “(May 2014:19). In this study, I carried out the above-mentioned requirements of the heuristic approach by intentionally selecting Black women as the unrecognised knowers, focusing on their experiences of marital conflict as a source of knowledge and interrogatively ask questions facilitated by the narrative interview guide

and vignettes, incrementally about the meanings of Black middle-classness, marital conflict and intimacy.

Intersectionality attends to patterns that cut across scales to show connections among systems of oppression ” (May 2015:20). Thus, in this study to do the latter, I used Intersectionality as an analytical tool to reveal links, particularly on patriarchy, religion and culture that oppress Black women , moreover how this oppression manifests itself in the domestic space and how this may have potentially contributed to past conflicts experienced see for illustration Naria’s story in Chapter 5.

Intersectionality’s matrix orientation enabled me to analyse numerous social identifiers simultaneously on both an individual and structural level (Hancock 2007:74). In both Chapter four and five for example I was enabled to attend to biographical factors and contextual details by focusing on individual experiences and not enmeshing or homogenising differences. In addition, I was enabled to take the intersection of those biographical variables and speak to broader issues in society such as gender equality in the family institution and power dynamics within marriage. Additionally, Intersectionality unveiled how structural realities, that is, how patriarchy, traditional gender roles and masculinities produce men that use physical power in spaces where they are financially disempowered to overpower women see for Qhawekazi’s story in Chapter 5 (May 2015:21).

I also used Intersectionality to avoid traditional explanations and grand narratives (May 2015). The grand narrative that could be used to examine marital conflict for example is the conflict theory by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, however it is not used as a lens to view conflict as this is the conventional explanation of marital conflict from Northern theorists that had not contextualised the phenomena of marital conflict across continents.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that Black middle-class has many interpretations. Furthermore, the Black middle-class have been privileged through different socio-political contexts within South Africa. Such privileges were enabled through missionary education, land allocation and international impositions on the apartheid government. The literature then showed that marital conflict occurs because of various factors for

example, money, alcohol and failure to live up to gender role expectations to mention a few. The findings give the impression that marital conflict occurs because of different expectations held by spouses. The conflict responses that contribute to intensifying the conflict include shouting and yelling. Responses that restore relations include discussing matters calmly and listening. Similarly, on the matter of conflict resolution, speaking calmly, with the use of positive facial expressions and body gestures restores marital peace.

Intersectionality was a relevant framework for this study because it revealed that Black middle-classness, marital conflict and intimacy are differently experienced. Furthermore, Intersectionality unveiled how the mechanisms of oppression and privilege operate simultaneously to either empower or disempower.



3 Methodology

A Journey of Discovering Untold Stories of Black Middle-Class Women as they encounter Trouble in “ Paradise ”

“Narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the history of mankind and there nowhere... has been a place without narrative...Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, trans historical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself ” (Jovchelicht and Bauer 2000)

3.1 Introduction

Narrative research has become a significant approach in studying the social world (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000). This study relied on the narrative approach as there is no human experience that cannot be articulated in narrative formation (Jovchelovitch et al. 2000). Even so, the following question may still emerge: what is the place of the narrative approach in a Sociological study focusing on class, marital conflict, and intimacy? My stand is that life stories when accurately used, may offer a key to understanding Black middle-class identity both in its ontological and historical foundation. Narrative approach also enables detailed in-depth narration in studying marital conflict and intimacy (Lieblich, et al. 1998:8). Thus, in the pages that follow I argue that the narrative approach was the most suitable methodology for conducting this study. This chapter also contains detailed accounts of the following research procedures: non-probability sampling, data collection and analytical procedures. The chapter is closed by addressing the ethical principles of social research methods applied in this study.

3.2 Narrative Research and Inquiry

Narratives are explanations of an event that are chronologically connected; narratives can be inscribed or vocalized from the participants under investigation (Streib 2013). In this study, narrative materials refer to both the audio-taped responses that the participants provided during the interviews and transcriptions thereof.

Narrative approach is most suitable for this study because the aim was to understand the lived experiences through the recollection of past memories (which were inevitably delivered in the nature of stories). Moreover, in answering questions that pertain to the past, of how conflict affected intimacy in their marriage, the participants presented their responses in the form of telling a non-fictional story of what happened, who was involved and what was the exchange of dialogue, and how it ended. The involvement of characters, conflict exposition, dialogue, climax, and anti-climax are all key components of a story (Lieblich et al. 1998). Additionally, the narrative approach yields information that may not be available through other methods. Lastly, narrative analysis allowed for an all-inclusive approach to discourses that reserve context and accuracy (Smith 2000).

The decision to employ a narrative inquiry was also ignited by a political agenda of inclusion of marginalised groups. From a social cultural perspective, Black woman in South Africa are frequently marginalised (Lieblich et al. 1998). Their stories are therefore needed in social research to express their unheard voices and empower them by including them in knowledge production (Lieblich et al. 1998). Thus, narrative research is appropriate as it permits for the participants' voice to be captured to a great extent.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

I employed purposive sampling in selecting participants. In purposive sampling the sample criterion is prescribed (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Purposive sampling compelled me to select participants based on known characteristics, which in this study is related to socio-demographic and factors such as experience, behaviour, and roles relevant to the study. This approach was beneficial because the aim of the research was to get a detailed picture of a phenomenon; this approach was used in conjunction with the snowballing technique (Ritchie et al. 2003).

3.4 A Note on the Participants

The women that participated in the study are Black. Black refers to the native people of South Africa who speak indigenous languages (Makoba 2005). In Apartheid South Africa Coloured, Chinese and Indian people were considered as Black, because they were also segregated by the Apartheid laws. However, in democratic South Africa much of that unified Blackness has degenerated (Harvey 2016:1). Thus, the rationale for focusing the study on Blacks is because their numbers in the middle class has grown since 1994 (Southall 2016).

The reason why I focus on the middle-class is beautifully answered in *The Fate of the Middle Classes*:

“I come to this problem as a writer who belongs to the middle-classes, i.e. is neither a capitalist, or person existing mainly by dividend drawing, nor a member of the working class. As a man I am keenly interested in the future of my own kind. As a writer... - and by writer I understand a constructively critical depicter of human society – I am obliged to be keenly interested not only in the future of my own kind, but in the future of the whole.” (Alex Brown:1936).

Therefore, the interest emerges to fulfil personal curiosity about middle-class marriages, as a middle-class woman and because only a few studies in South Africa have focused on Black middle-class women in the context of marriage and intimacy simultaneously.

The women that participated were between the ages of 30 - 65 years. The median ages of brides entering civil marriage for the first time is 30 years. All the participants were employed. Employment is an important variable because the income approach to conceptualising the middle class is measured on income (Visagie 2011).

The participants in the study were either divorced or married. The reason for choosing both is because both those who are married and divorced had experienced marital conflict. Three types of marriages are recognised under South African law: civil marriages, customary marriages and civil unions (www.gov.za/documents/recognition-customary-marriages-act). For the purpose of this study civil unions will be excluded because they apply to same sex couples, thus

it will not be necessary to expound on its definition here. A civil marriage is defined as marriage performed, recorded, and recognised by a government official (Pillay 2019). A civil marriage may be performed by a religious institution and recognised by the state, or it may be entirely secular. The definition of a customary marriage is one that is negotiated, celebrated or concluded according to any of the systems of indigenous African customary law which exist in South Africa [https\(www.gov.za/documents/recognition-customary-marriages-act\)](https://www.gov.za/documents/recognition-customary-marriages-act)).

3.5 Data Collection

At the end of the field work eight women had been interviewed twice. The length of the interviews varied according to the number of stages that each participant outlined as being an integral stage in the story of their marriage. All the interviews were recorded on a sound recorder app downloaded on a pc. These interviews were later transcribed.

Another requirement of being included in the study was that the participants should have watched the Tyler Perry film: *Why Did I Get Married?* This was important because one of the intentions of the study was to understand how issues played out in the South African context were similar or contrasting from the film. Hence. I decided to employ vignettes to help me achieve this end. Vignettes are visual sources which include pictures which are presented to research participants during the interviewing stage (Bendelow 1993). Vignettes stimulate detailed responses.

Thus, to begin the process of using vignettes I showed the participant a page (see Appendix D) with pictures illustrating the four couples from the Tyler Perry film: *Why Did I Get Married?* Then I gave the following directives: These pictures show the couples from the film *Why Did I Get Married?* Please study these pictures and then indicate which of the couples from the movie do you identify with the most? After they selected the item/s they identify with, I then proceeded to say: Tell me more about your selection. My participants enjoyed responding to vignettes and some felt the experience assisted them to put their own experience into perspective (Hughes and Huby 2004).

3.6 Designing the Narrative Interview Guide

I watched the Tyler Perry movie: “Why Did I Get Married?” repetitively whilst making notes of questions that I could incorporate in the narrative interview guide during the screening. I then drew up a list of ‘exmanent’ questions. Exmanent questions are those that reflect the interests of the researcher these questions appear in the narrative interview guide (See Appendix C) (Jovchelovitch et al. 2000). All the exmanent questions were guided by the objectives of the study.

3.7 Explanation of the Research Questions

The first objective of the study was to understand conceptions of middle-classness. Thus, to gain insight on that issue the following question was posed: *Earlier you self-identified yourself as a middle-class please state what you mean by this?* The second, third and fourth objectives are centred around various aspects on the theme of marital conflict. These aspects are understanding the situations triggering conflict, assessing the responses of conflict and examining conflict resolution strategies. In drafting the questions to address the issue of marital conflict, I wanted to ask the questions in such a way that would elicit the response in the form of a story, so as to adhere to the narrative nature of the project. To achieve that goal, the task of *stage* outline as proposed by (Lieblich et al. 1998:24) was employed.

I introduced the stage outline by saying: Every couple’s marriage can be written as a story. In so saying, I would like you to think about your marriage as a story. First, think about the chapters of this story. I have here a page to help you in this task. Write down how many chapters your story has; now may you please give each chapter a title. The one-page form handed to the interviewee included two columns – the left for recording of the stages by years and the right for providing titles for each stage (Lieblich et al. 1998).

I gave the directives for the second time when the chapters were all recorded, I proceeded to say: I will be asking you questions pertaining to marital conflict about each of the titles of the chapters of your love story. Before I ask you the questions, please give me background information about your life in each of these chapters. After the participant provided background information on a chapter the following questions pertaining to marital conflict were asked: (1) What did you argue about during that time? (2) How did you resolve the conflict? (3) How did you respond to the conflict? Note that, the same three questions (pertaining to marital conflict) were asked for each chapter that they outlined on the piece of paper. The logic behind that was to unpack the various triggers of conflict across time and to assess for differences and change if any exists on triggers, responses, and resolution of conflict over time

The fifth objective was to understand how intimacy unfolds in the presence and absence of conflict. Thus, the narrative guide contained eight questions that pertained to intimacy. These are: (1) How did you talk to your partner during this argument? (2) How did you talk to your partner after this argument? (3). Did you show care during that argument? (4). Did you show care after that argument? (5) How did you feel about your partner during that argument? (6) How do you feel about your partner following that argument? (7). Do you disclose private information during an argument? (8). Can you disclose private information after an argument? The paired intimacy questions that were asked in each chapter were different because I was assessing multiple aspects of intimacy as suggested by Zelizer (2005). Zelizer (2005) explains that these elements are: (1) discursive intimacy, (2) attention-provided, (3) emotional-closeness and (4) shared secrets.

This then marked the end of designing the narrative interview guide. At this stage, I decided that the narrative interview guide would be attached to the front of the fieldwork diary that I would have at my disposition during all my interviews. The fieldwork diary is a useful research tool for capturing notes during data collection for reflexive commentary (Shenton 2004). In my fieldwork diary I decided I would keep note of setting observations, mood and energy felt during the interview. All these notes were useful during the analysis.

3.7.1 Being on Sight Days

I experienced an ethical dilemma before starting fieldwork. I felt like I was doing something wrong by asking the participants such sensitive questions about their relationships because growing up children were never permitted to hear grown up marital issues. Thus, my upbringing made me refrain from asking grown-ups their private matters. Although I am an adult now, I nevertheless felt like I would be overstepping boundaries, as these women were my elders by asking about sensitive topics such as intimacy.

I was excited about learning about the various stories in the lives of my participants. This excitement however was intertwined with apprehension about asking about seemingly personal issues that need only be shared between husband and wife. I shared the sentiments of ethical specialist Gesa Kirsh (1999) as she states: "I was disquieted by my interviewee's sharing of private thoughts...On occasion I imagined myself a voyeur, glimpsing the details of other people's lives without having to reveal any of my own" (Kirsch 1999: xi).

3.7.2 The Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with four women during the first week of data collection. The purpose of the pilot study was to assess the practical possibility to conduct it, the precision of the research questions and the adequacy of the data collection tools (Bless and Sithole 2013). The pilot study was a process of trial and error.

The first interview during the pilot study brought it to my attention that it is time-consuming to go through the participant information sheet, allow the participant to read the consent sheet and fill in the biographical questionnaire on the day of the initial interview. Thus, the decision was made to have two sessions. The first session involved introducing myself and the context of the project using the participant information sheet (see appendix B). I then issued out the consent form (see appendix A).

The function of this participant information sheet was to acquaint the participant with the study. The information sheet provided insight on my educational background, qualifications, and research interest. I then had the task of explaining the context of the research to the participant. The participant information again, contained information regarding the aims and objectives of the study. The purpose of explaining

the context of the research was to create an understanding on the main themes of the study. I also found it necessary to give the participants examples of the questions that I would be asking them during the questioning phase. The narrative interview guide (see appendix C) assisted in showing the participants the types of questions they could expect. From there, I entered a discussion about the study ethics and their rights in the study as participants.

Following that, I then asked:

Now that I have introduced myself the project and your rights, would you like to proceed or discontinue participation in the study? (Puleng Hlanyane)

At this stage if permission was given for continuance, I then issued them with the consent form, which I would give the participants time to read through and sign before proceeding to the next step. The purpose of the consent form is to both ask permission for participation and the confirmation from the side of the participant to partake in the study.

The last activity that was done upon the first session is the completion of the biographical questionnaire. A function of the biographical questionnaire was to obtain demographic information from the participant this included their age, nationality, home language etc. The biographical questionnaire contained close-ended questions regarding the length of the marriage, the type of marriage and the bridal dowry (lobola) offered, such questions later helped in the analysis. When the participants were done completing the biographical questionnaire a date for recorded face-to-face individual narrative interviews was requested. In setting a date, I would then ask for permission to use an audio-recorder in the next session.

The function of the audio recorder was for recording the narrative interviews (Jovchelovitch et al. 2000:2). The pilot study also helped me to get acquainted with some of the data collection tools, particularly the voice recorder. For the pilot sessions the voice recorder used was the app that comes along with a Samsung phone. However, later on when I listened to the interviews, the sound quality was low. Hence, the decision was made to get a higher quality recorder. I then downloaded a sound recorder on my pc, of which the quality of the sound was so loud that there was no need for headsets.

The pilot study was also useful for creating awareness on the need for a suitable location when conducting interviews. The first participant was interviewed at work during her lunch break. This became problematic as people would come knocking on the office door. This interrupted the flow of the interview. I thought it then wise to conduct the second interview at a coffee shop at a mall. The mall was problematic as recording captured background music, and other people's conversations. Hence, this experience taught me that interviews would best be conducted in a space whereby there would be no noise pollution. Following this observation, I decided to conduct the interviews in the participants' homes.

The nature of the questions in the initial interview guide did not seem to elicit responses in the form of stories. Thus, the wording of the questions was rephrased to elicit a narration instead of a short answer for example instead of asking: how did you two meet? I would say, could you please tell me the story of how you two met? After these changes were made by the time the fourth participant was interviewed, I noted that the interviews were now longer than 20 minutes, the fourth interview was now an hour long. Finally, I felt ready to get this show started and interview the eight participants of the study.

3.8 The Elicitation Technique of Narrative Interviewing

According to Jovchelovitch et al. (2000) the narrative interview is conducted over five stages: preparation, initiation, narration, questioning stage and small talk. Each stage is governed by rules. The purpose of these rules is to provide guidance for the interviewer to elicit rich narration on a topic of interest. In conducting the narrative interviews for this study, I followed the five-stage guideline outlined in Jovchelovitch et al. (2000). Thus, to systematically show how the process was executed in the field, I explain how an interview that was conducted on day 1 with Naria was conducted.

3.8.1 Stage 1: Preparation

Preparation involved calling the participant the day before the interview to remind them of the appointment.

3.8.2 Stage 2: Initialisation Phase of Narrative Interviewing

The first session with Naria was conducted at a coffee shop (as no recording would take place). The agenda of this session was to introduce myself and complete the necessary documents. The participant information sheet was read. At the end of reading it I asked Naria if she had any questions. She said she had none. I then issued her with the consent form. This was again read out. At the end of reading the form, I asked: Would you still like to continue with the study? She replied enthusiastically: gal, of course. Responding to her reply I asked her to sign the form. The last document that was given to her to fill out was the biographical questionnaire.

3.8.3 Stage 3: Main Narration Phase of Narrative Interviewing

The third phase of the elicitation technique is the main narration phase. According to Jovchelovitch et al. (2000) this is the recording stage. Naria's interview was recorded during the second session. It is also during this process that the vignettes were introduced. According to Jovchelovitch et al. (2000) the use of visual aids in narrative interviews should be incorporated during *Initialisation*. In this study however, I decided to use it during main narration, because I wanted *Initialisation* to be focused on introductions, and completing the necessary documents.

My second session with Naria happened on a warm spring day. As I am going down the driveway of her house, everything is magnificent and awe-inspiring. Her double-story house situated in an Estate is a modern South African building, painted with contemporary earthly colours. As I get out of the car, I get greeted by a young man in his 20's, who she later explains is a live in chef. He opens the door and right in front of me is a wall with various portraits, wedding pictures and a picture of her sailing in a boat on a trip overseas. The furniture inside the house is also very trendy and up-market. To build rapport, I complemented her outfit. She responded by stating that she started the day by meeting up with a potential buyer in an attempt to sell one of their properties. (Note: I then further realised the importance of meeting participants in their homes, the material details of their homes fostered greater understanding on middle-class lifestyles.)

Naria then invites me to take a seat in the dining-room. I patiently wait for her and prepare myself for interviewing. I asked the questions as outlined from the narrative interview guide and as she was responding, would listen attentively and take down notes and probes in the fieldwork diary.

3.8.4 Stage 4: The Questioning Phase of Narrative Interviewing

The fourth phase of the elicitation technique is the questioning phase. According to Jovchelovitch et al. (2000) this phase should not start until the interviewer has sufficiently probed the end of the main narrative. The questioning phase is where my attentive listening bore its fruits because at this stage I had to follow up on all those notes, uncertainties and interests that I could not ask during narration. Furthermore, at this stage I translated the eminent questions into immanent questions using the language of the participant to complete the gaps in the study (Jovchelovitch et al. 2000). This phase is meant to elicit new material beyond the self-generating schema of the story before concluding talk. In ending my interview with Naria I said: This brings us to the end of our interview, is there something more that you would like to tell me relating to our topic before I stop the recorder.

3.8.5 Stage 5: The Small Talk Phase of Narrative Interviewing

The fifth phase of the elicitation technique is the conclusion of the talk. According to Jovchelovitch et al. (2000) this process entails switching off the recorder and engaging in small talk with the participant. This kind of talk is informal. Over the small talk Naria stated that taking part in the study was a therapeutic experience for her. All five phases as proposed by (Jovchelovitch et al. 2000) were adopted during the data collection process of the current study.

3.9 Data Analysis

Narrative analysis happened in three stages: transcription, structural and content narrative analysis. The first stage involved transcribing the audio-taped narrative interviews (Jovchelovitch et al. 2000). For this study, the narrative interviews were saved on a disc. To start the transcription process, the disc containing the narrative interviews was inserted to my PC (Lenovo laptop), thereafter I listened to the

recordings. I then proceeded to create zip locked files whereby, all the recorded interviews were transcribed and saved.

The transcribed documents went through a second level of analysis. The second level is known as structural analysis (Lieblich et al. 1998). Narrative structural analysis allowed me to capture each individual story of the participant which fostered understanding on the influence of historical background, environment, other people and time on the studied phenomenon (Lieblich et al. 1998). Firstly, I designed a profile for each participant. This profile contained an abstract constructed from the biographical and environmental factors of the participant which were extracted from the biographical questionnaire (see Appendix C). These abstracts were used in Chapter 4 and 5 respectively to introduce the participant to the reader. The abstracts allowed me to practice Intersectionality's matrix orientation of accounting for multiple social identifiers to interpret the participants' lived experiences.

The second step was to identify the structure of the plot. I was guided by the plot classification model proposed by (Lieblich et al. 1998). The four basic narrative structures give form to human experience and these are namely the romantic, the comic, the tragic and the ironic (Makoba 2005). I 'thus unpacked the narratives according to this typology. The third step involved analysing the sequencing of events and inclusion of different characters. In analysing the sequencing of events & inclusion of different characters, the way in which the story is narrated from the beginning to the end was examined. Attention was drawn on the order and arrangement of events, as told by the narrator. The event itself is described. The way in which the narrator goes back to and draws from the event in different sections of the narration is assessed. An assessment on how and when various characters are included in the story is carried out. The actions and voices of these characters was given attention (Makoba, 2009; 62).

Time is an important orientating concept of narrative research. The components of relation to time axis examines what Labov (1982) referred to as orientation. Orientation pays attention to how the storyteller, orientates the listener to both the time and place of the events being narrated (Makoba, 2009:63).

In the structural analysis of the story attention was given to the complexity and coherence of the story. Thus, it is examined how coherent, that is the logical

development of the narrated story and the complexity refers to intricacies or difficulties that may be detected in the story.

Emotions and feelings are important components of the story. Thus, it is important to identify and interpret the emotions evoked by the story both within the storyteller and the listener. The application of this framework is found below.

Preliminary Findings: Extracted from Structural Analysis

Naria

Naria is a 34-year-old northern Sotho speaking black middle-class women. She has tertiary education qualifications in Marketing and Software specialisation, and she is currently reading towards her LLB degree. Her career started off as a flight attendant, she then progressed to entrepreneurship whereby she presently co-owns a construction company and law firm with her husband; she also works as a part-time real estate agent. Naria has been together with her husband for 7 years. They have two children together. When asked what title she could give a book that would narrate on her marital life. She gave it the following title.....Furthermore, she stated that the book would be divided into three chapters and those chapters would be entitled as follows: Chapter 1 “I am Not Single”; Chapter 2 “ I Said I Do”; Chapter 3 “ First Year of Marriage after 7 years”. Naria was raised to be independent and self-reliant.

Structure of the Plot:

Naria’s story develops as a tragedy, characterised by some sad events. It appears that after she marries Lwazi her life story declines away from a euphoric and positive period to an existence dominated by stress and marital challenges. The tragedy begins with the death of her now deceased lover (uNokphila); her marriage to uLwazi therefore was therefore a rebound from the perfect love she found from uNokphila. Naria and Lwazi experienced trouble in paradise from the on-set of their relationship. For example, during their courtship stage he would fight with her about being unpunctual.

She states: “For example, if we meeting for lunch and we meet at six, and I get there, I’m always late... I get there half-past six, his not talking. I’ll be talking by myself until

he gets better.” Naria also goes on to explain that the cause of their arguments is that he is temperamental, that is he is quick to anger and is emotional. Naria feminizes Lwazi’s emotions by stating the following: “So it was always that thing where he gets upset very quickly and for mina it takes forever to get upset. Yena it’s very quickly, he’ll get over it but that for me is very, I always say emotional. His, his, I always thought that time of the month with him, because you just didn’t even know. So, it was mainly that firstly.” Men do not go through menstruation hence by attributing his emotional outbursts as synonymous to a woman who is having her monthly period infers to that he is not man enough for her.

This notion of Lwazi being inadequate and mismatch for her is made more apparent in the juxtapositions she draws between him (Lwazi) and her deceased lover. (UNokphila). Naria was initially drawn to Lwazi’s personality traits, as suggested by this statement:

“met this guy liked him, always been into nice, quiet shy guys, I like that type because I talk a lot. He was attractive, gentle and easy and you know and I liked that but at the same time I got bored easily. So, I had met another guy, and he was different he was more talkative, more confident, more romantic. More this more that and I started falling for that because this was too, it was sweet but it was just not... I thought he could not handle me. So, let me go. I dated the other guy.” Despite the boredom that resulted as a result of his personality, his financial standing was insufficient for her lifestyle, Naria was high-maintenance. She explains: “so he came we chilled I was with my friends. And I remember he asked me ukuthi so do we still have a chance. So, I’m like dude I’m living my life I’m seeing the world, I’m meeting millionaires, I ain’t got time for this... if you cannot take me on a massage every month, and see the world, book me a flight to Cape Town for lunch. If you can’t do that, like if you can’t do that you cannot do nothing.”

UNokphila on the contrary was her perfect match, she did not find him lacking in any respect. Naria describes uNokphila as follows: “he was more talkative, more confident, more romantic. More this more that and I started falling for that cause this was to..., it was sweet but it was just not... I thought he could not handle me. So let me go. I dated the other guy.” uNokphila was everything to Naria she admits: “ When I was with my boyfriend that passed away...for me it was I couldn’t see anything else

that was the love of my life and nobody else mattered. Nothing mattered.” The strife and tragedy in her life starts with his death because with Lwazi she never experienced the ecstasy, closeness, peace and harmony that she shared with UNokphila.

Lwazi came back to Naria’s life shortly after the death of Nokphila. He asked Naria if they could rekindle the flame; Naria consented. She was in pain and with the love of her life resting in death, getting back together with Lwazi made sense. Lwazi loved her through the pain, even so uNokphila lived in her memories. She still found herself reminiscing about him and what he use to do for her despite being with Lwazi she explains:

“ And, fine weeks later he comes back but I’m still hang up with my ex that passed , I don’t know why I call him my ex anyway. Yah, still that feeling you know. I mean when he came into my life, he like rubbed all that pain away, it was just those moments when it got better so much so much quicker than it did, you know, but still it was, it was different. That one was very romantic, he understood me and took care of me in a way that he understood, you know. But this one is very staunch, his very stubborn, his not romantic, his not “let me take you there and there”, his not like that and like, you know, his just. You know he loves you, because he is always their nan-nan and he says it. It’s not a lot of gifts, not a lot of, you know, what I thought, I should always be happy, I should always be looking good, I should always be getting massages, that was what I was used to, but now this is different, but I still love this man, you know. So, I think the most attractive quality for, kim- kuye, was the fact that, I mean, he was a very special guy, he loved you over but did not spoil you know. So, he understands my craziness, not judging me into believing I’m not spiritual enough, you know, I’m not, you know. So, yah that was our life before that.”

The tragedy of losing UNokphila would have been lessened if her union with Lwazi brought happiness and peace. Their relationship has been strained with conflict from dating and this continued into their courtship.

A marriage proposal, is an event that should be marked with happiness, excitement and love however for Naria that was not the case. Lwazi fought with Naria on the day that he proposed to her. In their marriage, they had arguments about her being too close with her male colleagues. Then he lost his job and they found themselves fighting

about money. Naria explains that all the conflict they had during that time were centred around the '*big elephant*' a term she uses to refer to his unemployment.

Life became hard for Naria. She was used to being well taken care of by uNokphila, living a lavish lifestyle of travelling the world and monthly massages. However now she was struggling to make ends meet with her household dependent on her salary. The situation resulted to her being in a state of emotional numbness, whereby she felt nothing for husband. Therefore, Naria not only narrates a tragic plot but a regressive story in which life events are strife filled and move her character away from bliss.

Sequencing of Events & Inclusion of Different Characters:

Naria entitled the first story of her love life as: 'I am Not Single'. She begins her story by transporting me back to the time when she met her husband. They started dating in 2001. However, she ended the relationship because the amicable characteristics that once attracted her to Lwazi she now found to be boring. She then started dating UNokphila. Naria then takes me five years down the line when she is in Durban, on vacation and she meets up with Lwazi again. Lwazi is interested in pursuing a relationship with her again, she however was having the time of her life travelling the world and meeting millionaires. Lwazi leaves a note on her table at Durban and the note said: "*I don't care what you say but one day you are going to be my wife*".

A couple of years go by Lwazi is now engaged to another lady. Naria is also in a serious relationship with uNokphila and there are plans towards ilobola. Nokphila loses his life in a fatal accident. Naria is in deep pain. During that time uLwazi contacts her. Naria recalls a day when he asks her out on a lunch date whilst she was at work. The contents of the conversation they had whilst on the date was that he still had feelings for her and could not bring himself to going through with the marriage to his then fiancé. A couple of weeks after that lunch date he calls her to confirm that the wedding was called off. Naria was not happy regarding all this because she did not want to be viewed as the girl who was the cause behind calling off the wedding. Nevertheless, uLwazi and Naria get back together.

Naria explains that dating uNokphila helped her heal from the wounds of losing uNokphila. However, they fought frequently during this dating period. She explained that they were both hard-headed and stubborn. The first issue they fought about during

this stage was her being unpunctual, this bothered him as Naria describes him as on orderly, timeous planner. The second issue they fought about was her closeness with male colleagues, he was not comfortable with how they hugged and kissed one another, she was unwilling to change that because she explains that there was nothing to it as this was their organizational culture. Naria concludes narrating about this phase of dating by stating that they quarrelled frequently.

Naria then moves on to talk about the next phase of their journey which is chapter 2 and it is entitled: *"I Said I Do"*. In this phase she narrates about the proposal. She states that the proposal was disappointing as they also had a fight on that day. He had invited some of his friends and some of her friends at his place. The plan was that Naria would arrive at his place, at a time he had set, and he would then propose to her in front of their friends following that they would all go to an Anthony Hamilton concert. Naria arrived late when it was time to go to the concert, this then ruined his plans. Naria explains that during the concert he was quiet upset, but she did not mind him, and continued to enjoy the music and was dancing with her friends. After the concert in the car, he starts telling her that he was not happy with her lateness because he wanted to propose to her. At that she asked to see the ring, he proposed, and she said, *"I do"*. Naria states that she expected something more romantic like being taken out to dinner, then him taking her to the mountain top and proposing over the sunset. Nevertheless, she accepted the proposal and they got married. She then moves on to talk about life together as a married couple.

Naria states that in the first couple of months after the honeymoon they started having issues about money. Naria describes herself as a spender whilst her husband is a saver. The conflicts about money became more intense after he resigned from his job because he now controlled her finances. She states that during this time she had stopped loving him. His unemployment led him to self-pity and a bruised male ego, and she states that she felt that he was not man enough. Naria then states that she spoke with a fellow colleague about her problems at home and she advised her to give him financial power. She had to do that by physically giving him her bank cards and any additional bonuses she received at work. She did according to the advice, and this actually was the resolution of their conflicts the fighting was less.

Naria states that during this time where they were grappling with the unemployment crisis, she discovered she was pregnant. When she went on maternity leave it meant they would have less funds because her salary was reduced. She explains that time as a hard time financially however for their marriage it brought them closer because, with her at home with no money for petrol and to pay DSTV they were forced to spend time with one another. The arrival of the baby also brought them closer because they would read and sing to her. The unemployment issue was eventually overcome as they now co-own a construction company and law-firm together. Naria ends her narration by stating that they are now at a good place because they understand each other.

Relation to Time Axis:

The story that Naria narrates is ordered on a chronological time axis. Naria provides an orientation to when each event occurred by giving the year. For example, she mentions that she started dating her husband in 2001. He speaks about another occurrence of meeting again with her husband in 2006 at Durban and he leaves a note by her table, the contents of the note were that they will get married. The title of the last chapter also provides orientation it is entitled: 'First year of marriage after seven years. She explains that this is currently where they are in their marriage, seven years has passed since she said I do, and it feels like the first year of marriage.

Complexity & Coherence:

The story is coherent as it transports the reader from the years of courtship, early marriage years and the present day.

Feelings Evoked by the Story:

As she was telling me about how conflict infused her relationship was during the courtship and dating stage. I think that she felt misunderstood and that her husband just could not handle her. It just hit home as it spoke to my current reality. At that time my boyfriend and I were on a break due to a serious argument, and the interview process arouse fear. The fear is that our issue may never be resolved, looking at this couple they have been married for seven years but the fights are continuing.

During the interview, I remember feeling uneasy as she explains to me how Lwazi (her husband) called off his engagement with his ex-fiance in order to pursue a relationship with her. The discomfort of that conversation was because I feel like a man who does not take the seriousness of an engagement commitment is not to be trusted. I also felt worried about a statement Naria made when she said: *"I met him again and felt nothing"*, I started thinking that the frequency of the conflict was brought about because of the absence of love. Thus, the overall feelings induced by reflecting on Naria's character is anxiety.

Angie

Angie is a 32-year-old Northern Sotho speaking black middle-class woman. She holds a tertiary education qualification in Accountancy. She is presently a full-time employee at the City of Ekurhuleni at the department of Social Development and is also an entrepreneur. Angie has been together with her husband for 12 years. They have one child together. When asked what titles she would give her book: She stated that the book would be divided into three chapters and those chapters would be entitled as follows: Chapter 1: "Happiest Moments"; Chapter 2 "Tension"; Chapter 3 "How do I Make Myself Happy?".

Structure of the Plot:

Her story develops as a comedy. There are sad events however the narrator tells them in a comedic manner, that yields laughter from the narrator. Her narrative is a progressive one in relation to her personal development. It appears that after she achieves the goal of being married, her social status increases as she achieves her educational qualifications and gains financial independence, even though the story of her personal development is progressive. She narrates a regressive story in which life events are problematic and move her character away from happiness to a life filled with tension due to marital problems.

Sequencing of Events & Inclusion of Different Characters:

Angie begins her narration by explaining the reasons as to why she identifies with the Mike and Sheila as well as Angela and Marcus from the movie: "Why did I get married?". Angie explains that due to her lower socio-economic background in comparison to her husband, she was taken advantage of in her marriage. Angie felt

taken advantage of due to her husband's extra-marital affairs. She describes the type of wife when they got married, she was obedient, co-operated and was often in tears due to the hardships experienced.

Angie accounts the origins of how her husband came to take advantage of her by providing a historical background of how they met. They met at her home town in Free-State. He was a professional part-time dj, who had come to perform in Free-State over the weekend. They met at the garage and went to a party together. They started dating immediately after that weekend. At that time Angie was young and had plans of going to the army the following year. The army was a means to an end. She had been told through hear-say that the army paid for its member's higher education fees. She then planned that her dream of becoming a medical doctor could be realized through affiliation with the army, as her parents could not afford to take her to university. She told her then boyfriend at the time about these plans. Upon hearing the plans, he offered to pay for her fees, he had the fear that the army would affect her mental health.

Following the conversation between Angie and her then boyfriend, his family called them in both for a meeting. The family suggested to her that they should get married and thus the idea of lobola was proposed to her. After that meeting Angie consulted with her mother concerning the issue. Her mother reported the news to her father. Her father was not pleased with both proposals that is, that of marrying off his young daughter and him paying for her fees. Despite her father's disapproval Angie and her boyfriend proceeded with the plan and that is how a former girl from the rural areas became a Johannesburg city girl.

Angie then explains that she no longer identifies with Sheila and Mike but she has evolved and now identifies with the character of Angela. She sees herself through Angela because she is now empowered financially, educationally and she speaks her mind. She states that speaking her mind involves being honest about sensitive issues such as confronting her husband about his smelly feet. Angie then goes back in time to shed light on the early years of their marriage.

Life as a married couple began in Johannesburg. As a couple they lived with her husband's older sister. The older sister had stated to them that they were not going to behave like a married couple whilst under her roof. They were not allowed to share the same bedroom. This happened for about six months. Also, during this period, she

had completed a short call-centre course and found a temporary job. Whilst working at the call-centre she also registered with Unisa for a qualification in Accountancy. Angie then finishes her narration about her educational background in explaining that she received her qualification in Accountancy and a second one in Corporate Local Governance.

Angie then speaks about the first chapter of her book that she entitled: "Happiest Moments". This is a time still in the early years of marriage before they had a baby. Angie explains that this time was happy because they would go out a lot as a family, whilst out they enjoyed eating out, playing games and shopping. She states that her husband is the type of guy that goes all out when it comes to shopping. Despite that these were happy days she nevertheless still had experiences of conflict during this time.

The subject-matter of the conflict was him speaking to her in a condescending and ridiculing ways that inevitably started arguments. Angie draws from a memory of an event called an Auditors function. She had accompanied her husband to this year-end function. At the function he had told her that she was too inquisitive "uyaphapha" and that not only is that behaviour inappropriate, but she is not well-groomed. He scolded her about her hair and dress being inadequate. Angie attempted to make meaning from this behaviour as she narrated the event and thought that it could be possibly linked to him being jealousy. Angie's response to her husband's unconstructive criticism would be that of resisting and dismissing it, because he did not present solutions, but merely highlighted problems and she resolved such issues by taking the first initiative to make peace and continuing with life

Angie then attempts to illustrate her husband's issue of unconstructive criticism by drawing on an incident that happened recently whereby they had a fight about an outfit advertised in the newspaper. She states that this was a good argument. The issue on the surface appears to be about clothes, that is recommending she buys something, and she refuses fearing that when she does buy it, he will say it is not nice. Angie explains that his tendency to criticize her is a bad habit that her husband has carried with him through time. Angie describes these "Happiest Moments" as a time where they enjoyed each other's time especially when going out however it was also a time where she was faced with marital challenges of infidelity, emotional-abuse; jealousy

and destructive communication patterns. Angie then goes on to describe how their relationship evolved after the baby.

Angie entitled the second chapter of her book: 'The Tension'. The issue that they were quarrelling about the most was concerning their child. Her husband accused her of being an unfit mother; he was of the notion that she does not understand their daughter as well as he does. Angie explains that during such conflicts she gets frustrated to the extent that she contemplates being physical, that is beating him. She admits that her husband has also mentioned the issue of the urge to beat her, however due to the rights and laws against beating woman he has never attempted it. Angie explains that most effective way of dealing with issues around their child was to "let it cool down", that is to ignore it for some time, then discuss it at a later stage. Angie describes this stage of their life as one that was marked by tension, thoughts of physical abuse and jealousy. The final stage of her marriage involves her seeking help for these marital challenges.

Angie entitled chapter three of her book: *"How do I Make Myself Heard?"*. Angie explains that this time involved her seeking professional help from a counsellor about her marriage struggles. She attended counselling alone. She states that the reason for seeking out this intervention was that she wanted a third party to give her the strength to leave. The therapist did not convince her to leave but rather heightened self-awareness and understanding, and made Angie be more in control of her emotions. The therapist also advised her that she could not change her partner, the only person she could change was herself. The therapy helped her through her depression and to be more in control of herself.

Relation to Time Axis:

Angie's narrative is narrated chronologically from the time they met to the present day, she then provides dates in terms of months and years in her narration. Angie states that she met her husband in October and in January she was supposed to start at the army, upon hearing that he proposed marriage and to pay for tertiary fees. Angie and her husband therefore dated for three months then got married.

Angie also uses time to help the narrator understand how long certain stages in their lives lasted. In speaking about her move to Johannesburg for example she mentions

that they initially did not have accommodation of their own and therefore had to live with his sister for six months. These were a confusing six months because even though they were married her husband's sister expected them to behave as if they were not married, they were not even aloud to sleep together.

Angie then has the ability to orient the listener to time, in not mentioning the date however by explaining what was happening that is laying the context for example se states that the chapter she entitled: "*Happiest moments*" *happened "some time before the baby was born"*. Angie again orients the listener to time when discussing the last chapter, that is chapter 3 entitled: "How do I Make Myself Heard?". Angie informs the listener that she has now been married for 12 years and that she sought help for her marital problems at the fifth year of her marriage. The significance of orienting us to time here is to show when she started to seek help for her issue for her problems as she could no longer cope. Angie states: "*We have been together now for like 12 years. So, what happened I think during my fifth year most of the things didn't make sense okay. Why did I marry him? I think he doesn't love me. Why am I still here with him? So, I told him hore my previous company that I used to okay work for inali those badibitsang whereby you can go for counselling and stuff and stuff and stuff. So, I booked an appointment with one of the guys there in Alberton. So, I went for counselling, alone, alone (emphasises it),*"

Complexity & Coherence:

Angie's narration is a story of self-evolution in the face of obstacles. The manner in which it is told demonstrates that evolution she for example mentions that at the beginning of her marriage was an obedient and co-operative type of wife similar to the character of Sheila however after she became empowered through obtaining educational qualifications and financial independence she evolved and became more like Angela. Her narration begins in the past from the time they first met, to the time they have a child, the time when she develops a voice to the current stage where she is trying to make that voice heard.

Feelings Evoked by the Story:

Angie's experience made me feel empowered, and emotionally strengthened because she evolved from being powerless to independent and thus proclaiming herself. Angie

began her story by identifying with the character of Sheila. She too, like Sheila lost her voice and herself in her marriage. Angie explains that her husband is very domineering in communication, his word is law. He did not give her a chance to vocalise her concerns or feelings about the issues they faced. The suppression of her freedom of expression heightened the feelings of identity loss. However, with the passing of time she realised that she had to re-claim her identity. She prioritized the re-claiming of this identity over her marriage and was willing to lose her husband if it meant that he could not accept and love her for who she was and not for somebody that she could never be.

The interview was taking place when I had temporarily was on a break with my partner due to increasing conflicts caused by the similar issues faced by Angie. These are issues of being emotionally abused through criticism, being told to change both my outer appearance, and alter my aspirations. I too became de-individuated in the relationship however after the interview had the strength to give my partner the same ultimatum, Angie gave her husband that being “either you take it or leave it” but I will not loose myself all in the name of love.

I recall feeling anger intertwined with a stinging pain when Angie was explaining how her husband once criticized and belittled her at an Auditors Function. Her husband had criticized her hairstyle and outfit, which she explains kept her down. I felt anger because her account triggered my own experiences of being told I was overweight, artificial and a woman lacking dignity by my partner. As Angie was narrating her experience, I recalled all those negative statements made by my partner and all those feelings of worthlessness temporarily emerged.

Mrs Peaches

Mrs Peaches is a 26-year-old, Tsonga speaking black middle-class woman. She holds the following tertiary educational qualifications: BA (Journalism), BA (Honours) in Sociology and is presently reading towards her Masters in Sociology. Mrs Peaches is an entrepreneur offering educational services. She has now been married for a year. They have one child together. Mrs Peaches shares a warm and casual relationship with her husband.

Structure of the Plot:

Mrs Peaches narrative unfolds as both a romantic and regressive narrative. According to Gergen & Gergen the romantic narrative is one whereby an aspect of life is configured as a quest or a pilgrimage to some desired end. The quest or desired end for her was to get married at a young age and getting married to her husband at the age of 24 years this goal was achieved. Furthermore, Mrs Peaches and her partner having a warm and loving bond. She states that they are both lovers and friends. Despite the fact that she has experienced bliss in her marriage, being married has hindered progress in another area of her life.

Gergen and Gergen (1986:27) describe the regressive narrative as one where progress towards a goal is impeded. Mrs Peaches perceived her new life that was to begin as a mother as something that would hinder her progress and that evoked feelings of depression. She explains: "So for me I went into this... I went into this mini-depression for the past few months because I felt like my life is at a standstill because now I am pregnant, I need to look after this baby, I need to look after myself and it was just crazy, that's why I say I identify with them for those reasons because I also want to just establish myself in terms of my career my studies and actually advance myself. But you find that it does become a whole lot challenging when you think now, I have to have a child and I can only imagine what next year is going to be like."

Sequencing of Events and Inclusion of Different Characters:

Mrs Peaches starts her narration by sharing her conceptions and experiences as a black middle-class woman. She states that class to her is all about finances, the ability to afford things such as loan and being able to move from the township to the suburbs. She states that being in the class comes with societal pressure to always acquire more hence to, meet those obligations of having more she states that this implies that those who belong to the class need to work more. After sharing her experiences as a middle-class woman, she starts talking about her relationship history.

Mrs Peaches narration is narrated in a chronological fashion starting from the time they met in 2014. She begins her story as follows: "Of how we met? So, we actually met at church hey 2014. He was visiting my church we were having a youth uhm revival, so he came, he came on a Friday. And uhm I think he was with his cousin my Church was in Soweto in Dobsenville. And he came on Friday. So, for that week I came and lived in Soweto by my uncle's place, so I could be close to church and what

not. He came on Friday and I was not even trying to be in a relationship at that time. I was like child I'm done with all these relationship things. But hey things happened. So, hey he came on Friday, and I didn't even know him I had never met this person in my life before so I was like oh hi, hi. They could not go back so the service ended late and he was not mobile at the time."

Mrs Peaches explains the weekend of their meeting, notable about this weekend is that the first question he asked her is what she did for a living and her like wise. She explains the details of that weekend as follows: He asked me: "so what do you do?" I said nah I'm still studying? He asked: "What are you studying?" I said, I'm studying for my degree in Journalism studies... I'm doing my third year, its four years so I will finish next year. So, he said: "Uh ok that's interesting". I'm like what do you do? He said: "ug nah I do something very boring I work in the farms," So I'm like whatever dude. His like: "nah I do engineer I work for Eskom right now"

Mrs Peaches and her partner started dating immediately after that weekend of the spiritual retreat. She explains the events: "then after that there was an all-night prayer that I was so eager to go there, I think his going to be there. Then only then after the all-night prayer like we walked to go get my aunt a taxi, then they walked me to go get a taxi. And that's when he asked for my number. And then from there ya we started talking. Then he came to meet me again, I think it was a Wednesday, next thing I had a boyfriend (laughs) but on the real though. On the first date, like when I left then I was in a relationship."

Mrs Peaches then talks about her husband being the ideal partner. She states that whilst dating she told him that she was a serious type of a person who was not interested in playing games. He then assured her that he was serious about her and he proved this by engaging her two years after they started dating, Mrs Peaches explains that he wanted to be engaged in 2015 a year after they met, however, she asked him to wait so she could establish her career and complete her first post-graduate qualification. Mrs Peaches then states that her career orientation and need for academic success makes her identify with the character of Dianne from the movie "Why Did I Get Married?". Whilst her husband is more like Terry, he has a family orientation hence he wanted to get married not long after they dated and start a family immediately. Mrs Peaches wants academic and career achievements to come before

having children. After highlighting this challenge of different aspirations, she then begins narrating about her experiences of marital conflict.

Mrs Peaches explains that due to the short span of marriage. They have not experienced serious conflict. The conflict that they have experienced is about his untidiness versus her obsessive compulsion with cleanliness; they have had issues around punctuality, she is a timely person and was angered by an event whereby he allowed his friends to make them late at a funeral unveiling that was important to her. He also has time issues concerning supper preparation, Mrs Peaches comes from a family whereby family members were accustomed to eating late. However, things are now different with her husband because he expects to eat as soon as he gets home from work. Mrs Peaches then explains that marriage counselling helped significantly because it equipped them with the necessary conflict resolution skills for when matter do arise. Following the discussion on conflict she talks about experiences of intimacy in her marriage.

Mrs Peaches explains that in the absence of conflict discursive intimacy is something they enjoy with her husband. She states that they are always laughing in the house and teasing each other. They have a mutual pet name for each other they call each other *nana*. Mrs peaches states that in spaces of conflict they still speak to each other with respect, listening to one another and she usually touches his hand as a gesture to show care even when there are problems. Mrs Peaches states that the environment is very important when resolving conflict, she prefers doing it in private spaces whereby it is just the two of them uninterrupted.

Mrs Peaches then states that her husband is a very affectionate lover who displays his affections by hugging her unexpectedly in the house and lying on top of her when they are in bed. However, when they have issues, he refrains from such physical displays of affection sleeps on his side of the bed facing the wall. Mrs Peaches states that during these moments she misses his affections but gives him the space he requires in such moments.

Mrs Peaches ends her story by talking about the differences between dating and marital life. She states that now that they are married, they speak less on the telephone and more in person about issues. This is different from the time that they were dating because when they were experiencing problems, she would vent by writing long texts

or over phone calls however now they are discussing issues face to face. She also misses go out for dates because now they themselves in the house more. Mrs Peaches ends of by stating that marriage has changed her mind set with regards to spending money, now she is less concerned about entertainment but more concerned about acquiring furniture for their home.

Relation to Time Axis:

In sharing their relationship history Mrs Peaches begins by sharing she met her husband in 2014, and she recalls that it was a Friday. Mrs Peaches again orientates the listener to time when she explains that during that year that is 2014 when she met her husband, she was in a space whereby she was not interested in pursuing a relationship. In her narration she chronologically tells the listener about the events that happened on the weekend of their meeting, thus she moves from the Friday of the initial meeting to the Saturday whereby they went to the church service, on that Saturday they did not talk much during the day however they met later on that night at the all-night prayer. Mrs Peaches then states that he proposed two years following the encounter of that weekend the year was 2016.

Coherence and Cohesion:

Mrs Peaches story is narrated in a coherent manner. As she first begins by narrating how they met, how life was when they were dating, she then explains the year of the engagement to the current phase together which is life as a married couple.

Feelings Evoked by the Story:

The overall atmosphere that the interview brought was a very joyful interview full of laughs and smiles especially when she calls on their relationship history & how she knew he was the one. The narrator maintains her bliss even when discussing serious themes such as causes of conflict. For example, when she was recalling an incident where her husband left paper shedding's on the floor and did not see anything wrong, she laughs about these differences of his untidiness versus her obsession with neatness. The euphoria of the interview subsided when she spoke about her fears about maintaining work-life balance now that they are expecting a baby. She states that she went through a mini-depression at the thought of not completing her Masters

studies at the record time, I felt feelings of empathy as she was speaking about the fear of not reaching goals at the time she had appointed.

Punki

Punki is a 35-year-old Zulu speaking black middle-class woman. She holds a tertiary education in Information Systems. She is presently an IT specialist working in the public sector. Punki has been together with her husband for 3 years. They have a child together. When asked what title she would give her book she entitled it: "Love Conquers All".

Structure of the Plot:

Punki's story unfolds as a romantic narrative. Gergen and Gergen (1963:47) explain that a romantic plot is one in which an aspect of life is configured as a quest or a pilgrimage to some desired end. Punki's story unfolds as a narrative because she has had a troublesome and painful journey in finding true love and she explains that when she met her husband she finally understood and found genuine love. Punki states: "As I was growing up, I experienced a lot of things some of them were hurtful. Like I've been hurt in the name love but when I met my current husband, I understand what the love means. Even though I have given up on love but when I met him, I understand that in love is where you experience yourself. I understand it means love that's why I said: "Love Conquers All". Conquers whatever we experienced in our past love. You forget everything coz now you have found real love."

Sequencing of Events & Inclusion of the Main Characters:

Punki entitles the first chapter of the story of her love shared with her husband as: "Meeting a Man of my Dreams". Punki begins by explaining that she met her husband after being severely hurt in matters of love and she now expected so much from him. She expected respect, understanding and love. Punki explains: "I've been hurt in the name of love so I have so much pain so when I met him, I didn't know if it was love or just a fling, so I expected a lot from him. I had a list of things I want in a man. So when he came into my life he fulfilled all those wish like I wanted a man who will respect me, a man who will understand me, a man who will love me so he was all that that's why I said he is the man of my dreams." Even though her then boyfriend brought bliss in her life they still had to face some challenges in their relationship."

Punki then explains that a matter that caused conflict during this dating period was her religion. Punki is a Jehovah's Witness. As a Jehovah's Witness an integral component of worship involves preaching from house-to-house. Her partner did not understand her preaching work and this lack of understanding contributed to relationship conflict. Punki attempted to make her partner understand by reasoning with him from the scriptures and showing him the scriptural basis of the significance of preaching. She states that at the end they resolved the matter by calmly discussing the matter. Her only requirement was that he respects her religious practices and he consented to her request. The issue of religious differences was resolved. Punki then continues her narration by moving on to the next chapter of their lives which she entitles "Having a Baby".

Punki briefly explains that having a baby before marriage was not the ideal plan. However, they felt compelled to have a child due to the following factors: the ticking biological clock, pressure from relatives and health problems that posed a threat to her fertility. Punki explains the pressures leading up to her pregnancy as follows: "ok since he was raised on a traditional family, they believed that since he is a boy and first born, he must have a baby like a baby. Who will carry the surname and must be a boy? So that thing put him a stress on him. Like he was like how are we going to do this because it is custom. My girlfriend doesn't have a baby. On my side I am the first

one. My sisters have babies and I love those babies. Now there is a possibility that I won't have any kid of my own. Like it put a lot of stress in me. On our relationship like on his side and on any side but we tried to be calm when we are together but immediately when we are together, I had to think about it or a life without a baby. My sister had a baby. I will not get a chance to be called mom. It was sad on my side like. We would use another procedure but it was difficult. Procedures were costly and because we are middle class, we didn't have money to waste on those things. That put use in a lot of strain in our relationship so when we had our son it was a blessing. Like love conquers all indeed because in our love we created our son even though we didn't know that we had a baby. "

The birth of their son was miraculous because during the time that they were having discussions about having a baby, it was the same time where she had fibroids that needed to be surgically removed, she states that on the day of the surgery when she

woke up the doctor also told her that she had given birth to her son. They welcomed the baby however other matters now emerged. Punki recalls that the main cause of conflict during this period was differences about how to raise their son. Punki narrated the issue of the baby drama as follows: “ ok like have a baby... have a baby it was part of our plan having a baby before a marriage but as time goes on we realised that we are growing up like am getting old and biological clock is ticking on me so we decided that if its wrong I do must have a baby since time is not on our side. It took us a long time till we have our baby. Finally, I remember going to the doctor. Telling me that I have fibrous and that it is impossible for me to have a baby. That thing caused us in our relationship especially on my side I was getting

fibrous which I don't even understand what it is. But finally, by God's grace I don't know how even the doctor cannot explain it coz all along even the fibrous I do know. Then I went to the doctor. The doctor told me am 3 weeks pregnant. I said is he serious coz they told me I have fibrous so how can I be pregnant? When I ask him are you sure I am pregnant? He said I am not sure because you have fibrous. Having my baby was something that I can't even explain. As time goes on, I didn't even realise that am pregnant so I didn't even have that special bond with my baby because I didn't even know If I was pregnant. I remember attending the Gyna because of the fibrous so when even when we do the scan it was no heart beat nothing. It was just the fibrous and the doctor book an appointment for me to remove the fibrous because they keep on growing up and growing up and growing up. Then after thy remove the fibrous. Yhen there was a baby. That's how I had my baby so we call him thandolwethu which means our love conquers all ‘, even the fibrous.”

Punki explains that she comes from a family background that believes in being strict in raising kids and that is how she was raised whilst her husband believes that children should be raised liberally. The issue angered her because she felt that she knew better about child rearing practices because she is a woman. She explains that in their discussions of the matter she was very harsh and stubborn. Her partner however was able to make her understand that being strict in raising children will only contribute to their child living a lie and being untruthful to them as parents. Her husband reasoned with Punki in this manner concerning the consequence of strict parenting: “Do you want that on your son coz each and every time he will lie to make you happy so we tried to resolve it. At first it was so difficult for me to understand why he would say my

son will become a good liar then he made an example that what if your son goes in a party? You know in a party he will think of a perfect lie. How will I tell my parents like when he comes back home, he will tell you a big lie. You will actually believe in it so you are raising a perfect liar. Once you give a baby freedom, he will learn that this is good and this is bad. That is how you raise a child and I was like ok I understand but then we are raising a pre generation child but ok. You understand I was so stubborn to understand so after the argument I was calm and ok I understand.”

Punki did not want to raise a liar. The issue was resolved by them agreeing not to adopt either of their parent’s child rearing practices but come up with a model that would be suitable for them and their son. Following the baby raising drama, Punki, then moved on to talk about life as a married couple.

Punki entitled chapter three of her love life as: “Start a New Life as a Family”. Punki introduces this chapter by first explaining that through all the main events that she has narrated thus far, they were not yet married; they got married after having their baby. Punki narrates: “even though we had a baby. When having the baby, we were actually boyfriend and girlfriend so now we have to start a family like a mother and a father in order to raise our baby in a stabled environment where it is a mom and a father, so we decided to get married that when we started a new life. Now we start a new life where there is me, him and our son. Like every day we living in a same house and we are starting a new life that we that we don’t know like now we are married we had to understand what it meant to be married. So now it’s no longer you it’s no longer me it’s we. So whatever you think about you have to think about me too. I am here now am no longer in my parents’ house. You are no longer in your parent’s house like you have a wife I am no longer a girlfriend. Am a wife I am no longer a Miss I am a Mrs no so that is what I meant.”

She then states that after marriage they needed to get accommodation of their own. However, an unexpected occurrence happened during this period. Her husband lost his job. Now he was not comfortable with the idea of her having to pay for their home hence he suggested they move in with his parents. Punki had fears about moving in with his parents. She explains that she was raised as a softy and that she wondered if her mother-in-law would be able to give her the same treatment as her mother. These fears were alleviated through discussions she had with her husband and he explained

that she now needed to be a grown woman and also attempt to gain understanding of her mother-in-law. She states that the issue was resolved. Her narration ends by her explaining that her and her husband can solve their issues and they are the best of friends.

Mashudu

Mashudu is a 42-year-old Tswana speaking black middle-class woman. She is currently studying towards a B.com degree in Financial Management. She works at SACP as Supply Chain Management Head. She and her husband both work for SACP and she is in top-level management whilst he is in low-level management. She has now been married to her husband for 17 years. They have three children together when asked what title she could give a book that would narrate on her marital life. She gave it the following title: "God's Gift". She allocated three chapters to the book. The chapters were entitled as follows: Chapter 1 (*Beginning of Happy Life*), Chapter 2 (*My Family*); Chapter 3 (*My Success*).

The Structure of the Plot:

The story unfolds as a romantic story. According to Northrup (1963; 47) the romantic is a type of plot in which an aspect of life is configured as a quest or pilgrimage to some desired end. The title the Mashudu chooses to entitle the book that is "God's Gift" is an indicator of the way she perceives her marriage. Mashudu explains that from the time they met her treatment towards him was different towards the way she treated other men that were interested in pursuing her. For example, she was not one to give the correct phone number at request, however with her husband she gave him the numbers at first request.

Sequencing of Events and Inclusion of Different Characters:

Mashudu begins her narrative by talking about how she met her husband and how she instantly was interested in him, they exchanged numbers and began dating in 1995 from that event. Mashudu then proceeds to discuss a period that she entitles the "Beginning of a Happy Life". The Beginning of a Happy Life started in 1997 when her husband spoke to her about getting married, from there onwards he paid lobola in 1997 in August and then they got married. Mashudu then speaks about conflict they had during dating. The conflict was because she wanted to go and watch "Days of Our

Lives” whilst he wanted to stay and spend more time with her. He would not take the issue well and when that time came, she would just leave. This conflict was resolved by him buying a television set.

Mashudu then moves on to discuss chapter 2 of her life that she entitled: “My Family”. Mashudu goes on to talk about the beginning and growth of her family of procreation. Their family started in 1998 when they bought their first home in Glen, Soweto; their first child was born that year. Mashudu explains that during that time she had not yet secured employment. Mashudu explains that having only one breadwinner was not a difficult time as her husband could afford to manage all the household expenses. Mashudu started working in 2001 and the family was happy with regards to her finding a job. In 2004 she gave birth and then in 2009 they had their last born. Mashudu explains that she entitled this chapter a big happy family because of the number of children they were blessed with. Mashudu believes that her family’s happiness is also contributed by the fact that they are God fearing.

Mashudu states that the type of conflict that is typical in her household is conflict related to household chores. Mashudu states that she is of the notion that whoever knocks off from work first should begin, the domestic duties. Her husband however is reluctant to do such duties because he was socialized in that manner, i.e. household chores are the responsibility of women. Mashudu explains that he was the only man amongst women growing up and these women assumed all the duties pertaining to caretaking of the home. Mashudu states that she accepted that her husband will not do such duties however she is grateful for the fact that when she is tired, he understands he does not expect her to cook; she explains that as caring behaviour. Mashudu states that she demonstrates care by “pushing him” to apply for senior positions at work. She pushes him not only for career growth but also to pursue life-long learning.

Mashudu then moves on to narrating about Chapter 3 of her life book entitled: “My Success.” She goes back to 2001 where she started volunteering at the recruitment office, her husband got her that job. Then after a week there were open vacancies upon applying, she received a job within the Information Systems division. She received a promotion three years after that event her promotion was from level 3 to level 5 this is a management position. In 2006 again she got another promotion from

level 5 to level 7, she is currently a captain at SAPS with the division of supply chain management. Mashudu explains that she has not only had career success but also has academic achievements. She holds two National Diplomas in management and Computer Science, a higher certificate in Personal Management and is currently studying towards a post-graduate Business Administration Diploma.

Mashudu then participates on a discussion pertaining to work-life balance. She enlightens me about her recent job obligations. She states that she recently came back from the training in Cape Town. The duration of the training was over a three- month period. She entrusted her husband to look over their home and their children whilst she was gone. She then complements him for supporting her with her studies and advancing herself.in terms of career growth. She ends her narration by stating that her husband has supported her throughout their lives.

Relation to Time Axis:

Mashudu's story is narrated from 1996 the time they start dating to the current date which is 2017 whereby they are still married. She gets married in 1998 and that is when she starts having children her last born is born in 2009. Her career begins in 2001 whereby she was an entry level employee on level three, within a period of 15 years she is now on level 7 in a senior management position as a supply chain head.

Complexity & Coherence:

Mashudu's story is narrated in a chronological manner as she starts to narrate it from the time of her courtship years to the current date where she is still happily married.

Emotions Evoked by the Story:

Mashudu's story made me view marriage as something that is desirable. The happiness experienced during her marriage presents the marriage institution as one that has the potential to bring bliss and growth in one's life.

Rose

Rose is a 36-year-old, Northern speaking black middle-class woman. She holds a tertiary education in Business Administration. Rose married at the age of 24 however

is now currently divorced. Together with her husband they have one child. She is currently dating and is content with her relationship

Structure of the Plot

The plot unfolds as a tragic plot. According to Northrup (1963:47) a tragic plot is one in which one falls away or declines from some achieved goal. The tragedy of Rose's narrative is that she eventually divorces her husband, secondly, she states that the experience of being married stripped her happiness away and thirdly she feels like a part of her was lost in the overall pain experienced.

Sequencing of Events & Inclusion of Different Characters:

Rose begins her story by entitling it as follows: "Uncovered and Discovered". She explains that when things were uncovered, she discovered herself. She states that she embraces her experiences of both having been married and the eventual dissolution of her marriage. Rose reasons that if she had not gone through the process of being married and divorced she would not have discovered the strong black woman that she is today i.e. to manage a household, raise a child on her own and that no matter what hardships she encounters now she can wake-up and put on a smile and make-up on her face. Thus, if the hardships were not uncovered, she would not have been discovered.

Rose moves on to talk about her experiences of conflict in marriage. The major topic of conflict was that her husband stayed out late getting drunk on weekends whilst she was left alone to take care of their baby; due to the fact that their house was huge being left alone scared her. She explains that on such occasions she would wait up on him to come home. Upon arriving he would scold her for being a disrespectful woman who waits up on her husband. She would then attempt to reason with him that she waited up not because she is disrespectful but because he does not have his own key and furthermore, she does not feel safe. Rose goes on to explain that she is not a person who knows how to fight and at seeing that she could not get through to him she would walk away.

Rose explains that communication with a drunk person is senseless. Drawing back to the communication she would have with her husband on nights were, he would come back drunk. Initially her approach to the matter was reason with him after that she

realized that her efforts are futile hence the most logical action in such a scenario is to walk away from the situation. She states however that the morning after such occasions her husband would be the sweetest person ever. She then states that such irony had the potential to make others believe that she was making things up. Rose then proceeds to explain various family members' perceptions about her marriage. She states that her brother and her father could see past her mask that she was wearing, they could see that she was unhappy. Rose states that the conflicts she experienced with her husband were never resolved.

Rose thereafter addresses various aspects of experiences intimacy in spaces of conflict. She states that she could still provide care for her husband even when they were in conflict. For example, drawing again on occasions whereby he would be drunk; she states that she could still wake up at seven o'clock in the morning and cook breakfast for him, create a healthy environment that was not polluted with negative vibes.

Rose then speaks about how she handled emotions. She does this by first explaining that as a black woman from the Sotho culture she was raised to keep her marital problems private. She states that even the Sotho proverb that states that a woman holds a knife whereby its tough grooms a Sotho girl-child to handle pain with strength. Thus, her emotions and pain were never for the world to see, they were repressed and kept within herself and her home where they belonged. Family members were shocked when she told them that she would was going to get a divorce due to this high level of secrecy. Rose addresses the impact of conflict on her emotions she states that she lost herself. She ends of the narration by explaining that what contributed to the decision of eventually getting separated was the on-going criticisms from her husband, that put her down and the physical and emotional abuse eventually she could not endure it hence it had to come to an end.

Rose's final comments about her marriage and the research project itself is that this project only focused on the negative experiences of marriage. She also remembers beautiful experiences such as being pregnant, motherhood, her beautiful home and her perfect job. She then mentions that her and her husband where too alike, they were also friends and high school sweethearts. She is of the notion that things changed when she became a mother and realized the importance of the

responsibilities that came with the role such as creating a secure and safe environment, he however on the other side still wanted to be young and free.

Relation to Time Axis:

Rose does not orientate her story within a specific time period, she merely narrates her experiences without making a reference to time.

Complexity and Coherence:

The narration is coherent in that she accounts on a particular issue of conflict that being conflict on the issue of her husband coming back home drunk. She then talks about the event at length, her approach and responses and her feelings concerning the issue.

Emotions Evoked by the Story:

I feel like Rose represses a lot of her experiences and did not want to share them. This notion was validated by her confession of the way she was covering the trouble of her marriage from the world because blackness as she explains does not allow such disclosure.

I think such socialization infiltrated and thus impeded her attempt of sharing her experiences it allowed her to talk about things but partially. Rose only mentions at the end of the interview that the reason to divorce was because of physical and emotional abuse. However quickly after that she makes a comment about the project that it is only covering the dark side of marriage she did have beautiful experiences, however in an attempt to highlight the beauty of her marriage she only highlights tangible things such as her beautiful home, her perfect job and the beauty of being a mother but in that there was nothing beautiful about the relationship with her husband that she could make mention of.

MELBA

Melba entitles the first chapter as the struggle. She states that they have been through a lot. (She giggles). She speaks about that they have been through family meetings. Their conflict is about: friends; his sister and how she spends money. She states that he was reckless in spending his money and that he would say she is controlling. Melba

states that her husband buckled to peer-pressure as his friends use to influence him to drink alcohol. He states that they were once on holiday visiting his parents and then he went out drinking and left her for two days at his mother's house. He came back drunk. She told the issue to the congregation elders. This issue was prevalent during their dating years; however, the alcohol problem has not occurred since they are not married. She states that she would deal with the issue with silent treatment. During the silence she would question the relationship and asks herself if this is the right person, should she let go and if she lets go is she going to find the right person. Melba states that during conflict she would really doubt being with him. Melba goes on to talk about communication during the conflict about staying and even though they argued, he remained calm.

Melba identifies another topic of conflict in her marriage as her sister in laws treatment of her. Her sister in law feels like she (Melba) took her brother away from her. For example, when the sister in law visits them when she (Melba) is in the kitchen the sister in-law will make sure that she moves, when she cooks, she directs Melba about what to do. Then she expects Melba's husband to compliment/ her in the same manner that he compliments Melba. Melba is off the impression that her husband is not trying hard enough to make them get along.

Melba feels that she is too involved in adult issues. She feels that she is competing with her sister in-law for her husband's affection. She feels like she is the other wife. Melba is of the notion that now that they are married her sister in-law is faking love. She does not feel comfortable with her being around. Melba recalls an event from the time of her engagement that caused conflict between her and her partner concerning her sister in-law. Her husband wanted his sister to be their bridesmaid and Melba did not want this because she wanted her bridesmaid to be of her choice and her husband's family took the sister's side. Melba was frustrated by this event and presently she tries to mend the relationship with her sister in-law even though it is difficult.

Melba states that when they were dating her husband was forever broke even though he would give her money, however, he was still broke. He would for example give her R400 and then ask for that money again, sometimes during the month because he would not have money for transport to go to work. She states that her husband had

many loans, the younger sister was demanding and he was also going out with his friend. After paying up the loan, he would get another one, but now he is at a better place in terms of the expenses having been reduced. She is very strict with money. She states that she does not want to be broke. Now that they are married, her husband states that she spends money unnecessarily, she states that she can buy clothes, she then stresses that she does not want to struggle. She wants a big house; he wants a small house. It is an issue to him that she sends money home. When her parents want money, she gives them money without questioning. She is not comfortable when her husband tells her how to spend her money. She states that yes, her husband's money is their money however, her money is her money.

She states that money controls the relationship, but what helps is knowing the responsibility of the other. She states that money has the power to break a relationship. She says for women, money has the power to strengthen love. Melba states that when there is extra money coming in the house like a bonus from work, she loves him, and her husband spoils her. She states that she has also learnt to love him when there is money. She states that when the husband has money, it makes the women respect the husband more. She ends off by saying that Christian women are always helped by God to maintain respect .

Relation to time axis:

Melba does not locate her story within a specific time frame however she narrates it according to memorable events.

Complexity and Coherence:

Melba narrates her story thematically.

Qhawekazi

Qhawekazi is a 42-year-old Isizulu speaking black middle-class woman her highest educational qualification is an MBL, master's in business leadership, she is working as a senior manager at Glencore mine in the department of industrial relations. She has now been married for 13 years. Together they have one child together. She owns a funeral parlour business and she is also in the property business. She is currently separated from her husband and is seriously considering divorce.

Structure of the Plot:

Qhawekazi story unfolds as a regressive narrative. According to Gargen & Gargen (1986, p.27) in the regression narrative progress towards the goal is impeded. Qhawekazi goal is to belong to the high class, however her husband lack of interests in accumulating higher educational qualifications frustrates her and again his preference for all that is cheap impedes her progress, of achieving her high-class status that she highly soughts.

Sequence of Events and Inclusion of Different Characters:

Qhawekazi opens chapter by entitling at as “Not a happy marriage” Qhawekazi says that she started being unhappy after the baby. She explains that before the baby her husband co-operated financially, they used to go on dates, and he used to be more sympathetic. Those things made her happy. However, things have changed since then. For example, she states that financially she is responsible for 80% of their expenses.

Qhawekazi says that she thinks that his high alcohol consumption is the reason he does not take on financial responsibility at home and it is also the reason why he is unfaithful. She complains he is not supportive even though he has double-income from the business and salary. The last argument they had about money was that from the funeral parlour business they co-own, in the last burial he took 100% of the profits and furthermore could not account what he did with the money. The issue is that the husband was secretive about the fact that payment was made. The main reason for separation was the issue about not giving her the money made from that business transaction. He only gave her the money when the family intervened and pressured him to give the money. She says that even after this intervention he is still not financially responsible.

Qhawekazi states money has a great influence over relationships. She states that money can improve bonding, communication, and lifestyle and sometimes it could be a negative influence because one could end up abused because of money. For example, at first her partner did not have money to start the business. He then asked her to fund this venture and she did. During that time of seeking funding Qhawekazi states that communication was more because she was an asset at that time, he

needed her. Then things turned when the goal (business venture) was materialised, he then became detached. Her issue was that as an investor she expected to yield fruits from her business, but she was not obtaining the fruits of the business. Moreover, when the business suffered losses, she had to pay the employees' salaries, she advised him to sell the business he however refused this then also contributed to the separation.

Qhawekazi entitled chapter two as physical Abuse and Overall Abuse. Qhawekazi explains that when they have issues, she articulates that she does not like those things such as drinking and unfaithfulness, instead of him apologising, he will instead beat her. She has realised that the pattern is about her asking about his whereabouts he will avoid the question, by fabricating an issue about why she did not lock the door and then he starts to beat her. She concludes they fight because she has asked about his whereabouts. She states that again after family intervention he will reduce his levels of drinking. When she challenges the issue of late coming, he further pushes the boundaries and arrives at 3 am instead of the already problematic 12 pm, then to one day and recently he would even stay two days without coming back home.

She complains that he has several single friends that contribute to his drinking. She states that the conflicts at home distract her ability to perform at work as her job requires a high-level concentration. The conflict also affects her mothering abilities she feels she cannot raise her child well; she cannot balance her responsibilities as her mother because she is emotionally not balanced. She delegates her home responsibilities. She feels that she fails to monitor. She reserves her tears for the sake of the baby. She states that marital conflict has resulted to severe health complications. She is now asthmatic because she is running around at night going to police stations because of the physical abuse. On the weekly basis she is not happy.

Qhawkezi entitled Chapter three as unfaithfulness. Qhawekazi states that when she goes through his phone, she will see conversations between him and his mistress, exchanging of I love you. People are talking in their neighbourhood about how they saw her husband with a girlfriend. He will also then disappear for the whole day. She states that she had strong evidence that he has a girlfriend, she found a condom in their house This unfaithfulness also leads to their separation. She states that the way

forward is for him to know his God and come to repentance because her belief is that only Jehovah can change a person.

Relation to time axis:

Qhawekazi does not make an inference to time in the narration of her story, she narrates based on major events and issues

Complexity & Coherence:

She narrates her story by the major relationships problem starting off with financial abuse, Then, moving on to physical and emotional abuse and ends off by narrating about experiences of infidelity in marriage

Feelings Evoked by the Story:

The interview made me tearful, I felt hurt by her story. I felt angry towards her husband and sympathetic for her.

Nandi

Nandi is a 28-year-old Northern Sotho speaking black middle-class woman. She is a business woman, who is in the beauty and supply industry. She is currently divorced. Together with her husband they have two children. She used to be in a in a polygamous marriage. She was the second of three wives. She states that she will soon be hosting a television show and she is currently studying.

The Structure of the Plot:

Nandi narrates a complicated plot with a combination of a regressive and progressive narrative. The narrative is progressive in that her husband introduced her to a life of privilege and is regressive in that he was again responsible for taking that life away. She is resilient and now she has found her independence.

Sequencing of Events and Inclusion of Different Characters:

Nandi begins her narration by talking about how they first met. She was very young, and he was old. Her father disapproved of their relationship. Her parents told her to get out of the house if she chose to carry on with the affair. She chose to move out. Nandi also raises other issues that made people around her disapprove of their

relationship such as the fact that he was HIV positive, his wife had just passed away and he impregnated another woman. Furthermore, her then boyfriend alerted her to the fact that his family required him to have five wives. Amidst all that space she made the decision to be with him.

Nandi then moves on to speak about the time of her engagement. During this period, they became business partners. She agreed to be his second wife, he then paid lobola. She then explains their living arrangement; during the week he slept at the first wives house, then on weekends he would sleep at her house. Nandi was happy with this arrangement because it liberated her from the domestic duties.

Nandi then highlights the disadvantages of a polygamous marriage. Nights were lonely for her and she would sometimes cry herself to sleep at night, she would have anxiety and questions about their relationship. She felt that she had to put on make-up to look better than the other wife, be active. In business so as to be seen as the wife who brings in money she felt she needed to be the women and top. She refers to her husband as a God who she had to worship. The set up was emotional and stressful. She speaks about the alienation that comes with the set-up. Friends are forbidden because they will influence you.

Nandi chose to narrate her story in chapters and entitled the first chapter the honeymoon. Nandi states that when they first got married, she was treated like a queen she got whatever she wanted. She describes that period as heaven on earth. He showered her with expensive gifts, made her dreams materialize by funding her business ideas and providing her with a lot of money. The conflict experienced in this stage was her jealousy about him spending more time with his first wife.

Nandi then narrates the second chapter entitled "Hardcore of Reality" Nandi begins her narration by stating that during this stage that she entitled the Hardcore of reality parents are not there and she is on her own. She then realizes things are not for free. She is young; a mother a businesswoman and she has to be successful at all these things.

The main area of conflict during this stage was between the wives and the distribution of resources. She then explains that the other wife was more of a homemaker and she is the businesswomen, who would help him make wise business decision. Hence, she

got more monetary wise. She talks about the lovely & expensive clothes; as well as expensive beauty treatment and perfumes he bought her. She explains herself as having a Cinderella life.

Nandi clarifies that she fought with the women not her man. She will tell her husband about the conflicts; He would comfort her (Nandi) by stating she is the best. Nandi explains that during conflict with her husband they communicated calmly about it. She states that there was no space to express her genuine emotions during conflicts because he is an older man, he is also a pastor. Emotions were repressed & conflicts not resolved because she does not want her to appear as a wife who does not have control over her emotions. Nandi explains that the real conflict in a polygamous marriage she is fighting to be a wife to her husband. She explains there is nothing healthy about a polygamous marriage.

Furthermore, she could not communicate her feelings because she holds a status in the community as a pastor's wife. Therefore, she does not want to lose her status thus she restrains negative emotions & outburst of anger out of the fear that her position will be lost.

Nandi then talks about conflict about the deprivation of physical intimacy. She states that on the nights whereby he would sleep at her house she expected him to render his husbandly duties; he would sometimes refuse. This then lead her asking her-self questions about sexual performance; she would also ask about the intimate experiences with his other wife. She would question if she is loved?

Nandi then moves over to talk about a turning point in their marriage, the night where her husband got shot. Earlier that day he picked her up from the furniture shop that they own, and they went for a picnic. The subject matter of the conversation was unusual at the picnic because he was preparing her for how she should conduct his funeral. To her shock that night they shot him. She rushed to the hospital however the other woman did not come. When she goes back to her house, the house was robbed the safe and the jewellery were stolen. His other friend comes and makes the suggestion that they go and tighten the other woman's house, they do that, and she moves in that house too for security reasons, meanwhile her husband is still in hospital.

Nandi, her cousin and her children; had to move to the other house. This meant that both wives and their children now lived together. Nandi states that they got along they even split the money they found to his husband amongst themselves. When he comes back, he suggested Nandi does not go back to her house. Nandi was required to nurse him back to health & nurse the other wife who was pregnant at the time. She then states her husband said the other wife should go back to her mother's house. She (Nandi) decided to call the woman's sister to look for her during her pregnancy because she was too busy.

Upon her arrival that sister cautioned her sister (wife number 1) that Nandi is on top of her game, she is more privileged. She overheard the conversation and Nandi reported this to her husband. That sister also spread rumours that Nandi plotted the shooting. Nandi's cousin and the sister of the other wife became friends and together ganged up against her by further disseminating the rumour that Nandi plotted to murder her husband. She states that she started to believe that she did do this.

Nandi then states that this was a very difficult time because during that time she also loses her father. She admitted that she planned the shooting; she then was attending court cases about the event. Nandi gets kicked out of the house and the cousin moves in her house. In that process she lost her kids, her job and her house. She had to go live at her mom's house. She became depressed did not want to see the day; because the day reminded her of all she had. She also became sick during this time. She had some growth. She had to be hospitalized; She mentions she had to attend government hospitals because her husband was never around to pay for her medical aid.

Nandi states that she was at a low accused of plotting to assassinate her husband and deemed an unfit mother too. She bounced back by dating another wealthy man, who she met whilst working at the furniture shop her husband owned. This man and Nandi's husband knew each other. When Nandi's husband found out that she was dating he could not deal with that. Nandi states that her husband organized false prophets to go speak to Nandi. These prophets deceived Nandi and told her that same people wanted to kill her. The prophets then told her that her husbands will be her saviour against the schemes of these people. The prophets then advice that she must be taken to this remote place unknown to her; there she will find protection. Her husband takes her to this place. Upon arrival she is instructed to fast for days for 14 days. On one occasion

at this secret place she hears someone approaching the room she was kept in, to her surprise the wealthy man who she has been dating comes in the house. After the man goes in the house; her ex-husband comes in & holds them both at gun point and then commands them to strip. He then said that Nandi and this man should engage in sexual intercourse, they abide out fear he will kill them, then her husband takes pictures of the two having sex. The reason was that the husband wanted to take pictures of them and then say this man was raping his ex-wife so that he could be sued and get money. After that she moved back to her house & they re-kindled the flame. Her ex-husband convinces her to open a case at the police station, saying that her lover was raping her; she could not go through with the plan. She was then kicked out of the house again.

Nandi states that after losing her husband and the other lover, she used her body to make money. She states she was an object, she felt useless and referred to herself as a bitch of the town. She states she prostituted herself she says one day she realized this is not her and decided to go find forgiveness through the church. The pastors she would confess too would also make sexual advances at her. The pastors would tell her that for healing she would not sleep with them. Nandi states that the factors that made her vulnerable to these abusers; was because she views man as providers that she needs. She said she was afraid of herself; afraid of walking her new path & getting her own. However, she made the decision to break free from the cage and learn to provide for her needs. Nandi ends of her story by stating that it was that decision that made her independent.

Content narrative analysis was the last stage of analysis. Firstly, I read each participant's transcribed interview quite a few times and in writing noted my global impression of it (Lieblich et al. 1998; Makoba 2005). Secondly, I decided on employing special content to extract the themes I wanted to use. After reading the interview aloud again I defined the major themes that emerged from the reading. To help discern the most important themes in each story, I assessed how much time, detail and repetition on the theme is given (Makoba 2005). This was a cyclical process that consisted of attentive reading, suggesting categories, and arranging the sub-themes into themes (Makoba 2005:54). Thirdly, I proceeded to place verbatim quotes across all the narratives and sort them under the themes that were already identified in step two above. Lastly, to draw conclusions from the findings, the quotes To do this, I examined

the way in which the story was narrated from the start to the end, so as to pay attention to the ordering and arrangement of events. I then highlighted in colour the different characters that emerged from the narrative (Makoba 2005). The third step was focusing on time. Here, I paid attention to how the participants orientated me to both the time and place of the events being narrated (Makoba 2005).

3.10 Reflexivity

Reflexivity was engaged in throughout the study. As I continuously reflected and acknowledged my emotions, position, values and beliefs throughout the project (Campbell and Wasco 2000). During data collection I engaged in reflexivity by taking down field notes. That reflexive form of writing has allowed me to frequently reflect on my personal involvement with the study.

3.10.1 Reflexivity: Feminist approaches and the use of “I”

I use the pronoun I to affirm my philosophical position. As a female researcher, operating within a feminist social construction paradigm, I recognised the impossibility of maintaining a neutral position during this research. Using I is therefore an indicator of the rejection of an objective reality, as the absence of the pronoun would signal my detachment, from the study (Campbell and Wasco 2000:780).

On the contrary my values, beliefs and emotions have influenced and therefore infiltrated the conclusions I draw. Having said so, I am convinced that lest a robot or supernatural being were to conduct this research, it was impossible to capture the reality in a pure form because humans are inherently value laden (Campbell and Wasco 2000:780).

By now the reader would have observed that this study embraces subjectivity. An indicator of the latter rests on two facts. Firstly, I aimed to investigate the subjective notions of Black middle-classness; that is to capture individuals meaning-making of their lives. Secondly, my own subjectivity was acknowledged in this process: as the participants create knowledge from their narratives; I co-created with them in re-telling their narratives and meaning making. Thus, on that basis, such knowledge is subjective and pluralistic from their end, and the meaning-making that I bring therein

is also subjective and value laden, from my end. This then inevitably, commanded the continuous acknowledgment of my presence in the write up.

3.10.2 Reflexivity: Points of Reflection

After the first Masters Workshop in February 2017 at the UJ corridors close to the Common Room, I remember having a conversation with a second year Masters student, concerning the current study. The dialogue between Mabone and I unfolded as follows:

Mabone: Ausi (a Sesotho term meaning sister), (with a smirk on his face) your research topic is both interesting and tricky.

Puleng: How so?

Mabone: Well to start with conceptualising your key concept, middle-class, should not be taken as a trivial pursuit, whilst we are there, how do you define middle-class?

Puleng: (Naively but nevertheless with great confidence I gave him an economics based definition provided in Visagie (2011) which I had neither pondered on or problematized at the time, because when one is first introduced to an arena you read first to get a general understanding as opposed to critically thinking about the digested material).

I replied as follows: I am operating from Visagie's income approach and the middle-class are those that earn between R3,000-R13,000... (Note: since then I have abandoned using the income approach since there are other variables that are determinants of class which are not captured by the economic approach.)

Mabone: (He smiled at me and arrogantly uttered) that guy does not know what he is talking about there is no middle-class. In South Africa there exists only two classes the rich and the poor. The rich are people who can stop working for years and still be able to afford a living and the poor is the rest of us who live from pay-check to pay-check. (The remainder of the conversation centred on colonialism, apartheid and the politics of class... much of the content of that conversation has been erased from my memories by the lapse of time, but the words that had an impact on me where *there is no middle-class*).

This conversation held with Mabone in February and another one with Manuela (a colleague who is also studying the middle-class, nine months later, were useful in bringing to the fore my then narrow-minded conception of middle-classness and these conversations prevented me from making a research error that would have led to biased reporting of the findings. I will talk about this sin to the research process which I almost committed later on for now; I want to transport you to the November Sociology Prize-Giving ceremony, to provide insight on a conversation held with Manuella. Manuella is a master's student who is also studying the topic of the Black Middle Class.

Manuella and I interchanged our experiences of field work and the findings collected thus far. She told me about her participant's lavish lives, how they all hold executive positions, have boats and own franchises. After hearing that report on her findings, I thought to myself one of us has recruited the wrong sample.

Manuella's findings made me sceptical about the experiences of the participants from my study; reason being even though our participants share some characteristics such as being tertiary graduates, being in professional employment and owning businesses, their experiences of middle-classness is heterogeneous. The foremost difference was the following, the lived experiences of middle-classness for my participants highlighted financial struggles along with privilege and the narrations she reports about are predominantly about privilege and abundant wealth.

As I got home, I was deeply anxious; this then brings me back to the error I almost committed. I almost went and sought out only managers for my study, however I did not, remembering that my responsibility to the social science community is not to produce the narratives of wealth that I think people want to hear, but it is my responsibility to produce the entire truth as it was narrated, even though that truth did not fall within my expectations or what I thought my readers expected to hear. This thesis is in fact not only a story about the multiple experiences of middle-classness, but it is also an exposition about the pluralistic nature of lived experiences with-in groups and therefore the pluralistic nature of truth or rather truths.

Today, I am earnestly grateful for these conversations as they helped me reflect upon my own conceptions of middle-classness. Reflecting on these conversations assisted me in examining and consciously acknowledging the assumptions and preconceptions

that brought into the research and that could therefore shape the outcome of presenting the findings.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

In order to avoid coercion, all the participants were asked to sign a consent form for: voluntary participation and the use of audio recording during the interviews (Nduna, Skweyiya, Khunou, Pambo and Mdletshe 2014). The participants indicated consent by signing the written form.

Psychological harm in research can potentially occur because of bringing about painful feelings or emotions and thoughts during the interview process (Barker et al. 1994). Bless and Sithole (2013) further explain that sometimes certain research topics may compromise the psychological welfare of the participants particularly in cases that require discussing past traumatic experiences (Nduna, Shwayiba, Khunou, Pambo and Mdletshe 2014). Discussing the sensitive issue of marital conflict did stir up painful emotions and memories in some of the participants. Nevertheless, none of the women had an emotional breakdown during the interview. Even so, at the end of the recording session of each interview, I informed the participant about the psychological services available to them, if they needed professional debriefing.

To ensure the privacy of personal information all the participants' audio-recorded data was saved in a password-protected file on my computer (Bless et al. 2013). The participants were assured that only the supervisor and I would listen to the interviews. A few strategies were employed to abide to the principle of anonymity. Firstly, I assured the participants upon the first meeting that their true names will not be disseminated in the thesis. Secondly, to emphasize this, those pseudonyms were captured on the biographical questionnaire. Thirdly, to further maintain confidentiality throughout the study and protect the participants' identities, I referred to them by these pseudonyms during the interview process.

Despite protecting participants, it is important that the study is trustworthy. In the context of qualitative (narrative) research validity means that the data collected is trustworthy (Brophy 2009:29). For qualitative inquiry Guba et al (1994) suggest a framework of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Therefore, I was not interested in the question of is the data collection instrument measuring what it is supposed to measure? But rather, I was interested in questions such as: Why

should I believe this? And how will the quality of narrative research be determined? Such concerns are relevant when the material to be analysed is narrative in nature (Brophy 2009).

The above-mentioned questions were addressed by using strategies to test the validity of narrative research results: In this study, I used four strategies to test for validity. These four strategies are: 1) Peer group debriefing, 2) Participant checking, 3) cumulative validation and 4) Audit trail.

Peer group debriefing is a process which involves presenting the research proposal and findings to people with expertise to critique it (Brophy 2009). With the current study this was achieved by attending masters' workshops organised by the Sociology department. There, Academics from the University of Johannesburg sociology department listened to the presentation and thereafter raised concerns and ambiguities about the study and further suggested recommendations in improving the quality of the study. Peer group debriefing was on-going during the study as additional workshops were organized by the supervisor and other colleagues who are investigating the theme of the Black-middle class and intimate relationships. Moreover, I attended the SASSA conference from 2-5 July 2017 to continue with the process of peer group debriefing.

An audit trail is essential for any social study being carried out because should the investigator be challenged the investigator can then show exactly what data is to be collected, how it has been analysed and what research methodology was used to reach the conclusions (Brophy 2009). Thus, the audio tapes from the interview are kept in a password-protected file on my pc should such evidence be required.

3.12 Conclusion

As people are story tellers by nature narrative research enabled them to share their experiences in a fashion that is familiar to them. The purposive sampling procedure used together with snowballing facilitated the process of recruiting participants. The data collection procedure of the elicitation technique allowed for the extraction of rich narration. Vignettes enabled the participants to talk about sensitive issues and compare their experiences with characters from Tyler Perry's *Why did I get married?* The three processes of data analysis allowed for the analysis of each individual story.

Reflexive practice is important because it helped me address my own biases in the research process. Lastly, the ethical principles used ensured research practice that was of no harm on those that were researched.



4 Diversified Meanings of Black Middle-Classness

“We need to take into consideration that being middle class and black is heterogeneously experienced and thus should be understood as such” Grace Khunou (2015:101)

4.1 Introduction

Overtime, Sociologists have been and still are captivated by conceptions of self-ranking and class divisions (Marx 1968; Phadi et al. 2013 and Burger et al. 2015). These theorists are of the view that individuals know their social position in society (Burger et al. 2015). Operating from that ideology, one of the objectives guiding this study was to investigate what the term Black middle-class meant to those that self-identified as such. Thus, shaped by Nzimande’s (1991) understanding that “classes are not merely ‘objective categories, but that they carry with them a baggage of subjective experiences” (Nzimande 1991:275), I asked the participants the following question: Earlier on you self-identified as Black middle-class please state what you mean by this? (see Appendix C). The findings outlined in this chapter therefore need to be interpreted as an analysis of the answer(s) to the above-mentioned research question.

Overall, the narratives on being Black and middle class indicated differences in the way participants articulated their conceptions of middle-classness and their experiences of this class. This chapter thus argues that the differential experiences of the Black middle-class position lead to diverse conceptions of what it means to be Black and middle-class.

The heterogeneity of experience and definitions of the Black middle-class position grounding this chapter will be explained through four sections emerging from the analysis of data. In section one, the meaning of being Black middle-class is explained via the precarity of the position. Section two unveils how the varying financial positions occupied influenced the multifaceted subjective notions of Black middle-classness. Section three reveals the significance of education to those that occupy the middle-class category. Section four discusses Black middle-classness in relation to residential preference.

4.2 Precarity of the middle-class Position

Black middle-classness was understood as a precarious position to occupy. The term precarious refers to the uncertainty of being Black and occupying the middle-class position, i.e. those that belong to the middle-class do not have assurance that they firstly belong and secondly are secure therein. Furthermore, some of those that initially self-identified as the Black middle-class later portrayed reluctance in not only belonging but on what it means to be middle-class.

Researchers have suggested that the Black middle-class position is susceptible to shift or collapse because of its dynamic nature influenced by various intermingling socio-economic and political factors (Khunou 2015; Burger et al. 2015 and Ngoma 2015). Additionally, in Ngoma (2015) it is stated that some of her discussants firstly considered being Black as an irreversible identity and secondly being middle-class as a fragile position to occupy. This then suggests a tension between the two as Black in the context of South Africa comes from a construction that was meant to deny access to resources (Southall 2016) whereas on the other hand middle-classness provides access to such resources.

The theme of precarity was initially ushered by Mrs Peaches response. Mrs Peaches was a post-graduate student at the time of the interview. She also worked as an educational entrepreneur whilst her husband worked as an engineer. She lived in Alberton in an Apartment complex and drove an Audi A4. She had been married for two years and was pregnant when interviewed. In providing a definition of middle class, she also raised questions about her full identification with this class position, she shared the following:

Besides the other social factors my mind always runs to finances where I am financially? Am I really in the middle? Am I in the middle because of where I live or what I drive? (Interview with Mrs Peaches, November 2017)

From the quote above Black middle-classness can be difficult to define as it raises reflective questions as opposed to easily boxing oneself in class categories, such questions are also raised in Khunou (2015). Mrs Peach's response further illustrates that being Black and middle-class is not only precarious from an experiential level as indicated in past studies (Burger et al. 2015 and Ngoma 2015). The position is complex

and unstable to the extent that individual's attempts of defining this class reflect that there is still much uncertainty of what qualifies one to belong to this category.

Rose one of my participants further revealed that the perilous middle-class position raises questions of belonging to this class. Despite having self-identified as middle-class, Rose argued that both the middle-classes and lower-classes experience the same financial struggle and on that basis are considered as one. Her conception was echoed by others who argued that *siyafana* (an IsiZulu word meaning we are the same) to make a similar point in (Phadi et al. 2013).

Rose works as a marketing officer and was studying towards a B. Com degree at the time of the interview. She is the breadwinner. Rose is single as she is divorced. Rose lives with her son in a bonded house in Heidelberg. Rose shows doubts about the existence of a middle-class category; she said the following to illustrate:

“Being middle-class? Mmmmmm, I think let me say for me middle-class simply means someone who lives their daily lives from hand to mouth and without great planning; there is no chance of growth and success. There it's a space where one needs to figure out what they want in life. It's not.... I don't think middle-class and low-income class there's any difference. There isn't because both are still struggling”. (Interview with Rose, December 2017)

The above quote from Rose reflects a reluctance to identify as middle-class because of a perceived unity of shared economic circumstance between the middle and lower class. Rose's conception extends Ndletyana's (2014) affirmation that the Black middle-class assumes the working class's practices and culture. Moreover, some members belonging to the Black middle-class carry the same plight of living hand to mouth and therefore like the working class the middle-class also experience economic struggle as suggested by Rose.

Rose's conception of the Black middle-class experience is shaped by her experiences of being economically vulnerable. Rose's divorce contributed to financial loss. Since the divorce her ex-husband does not pay child maintenance, making her responsible for all her sons' financial needs. In addition, Rose's household is a single-income household dependent on one source of income, that being her monthly pay cheque of R17,000. Her financial reality then makes one discern the reason of conceiving of

middle-classness as living from hand to mouth. An income of R17,000 places her in the lower-middle class, which obviously comes with higher levels of precarity.

Rose's evaluation of shared life similarities between the lower and middle class alludes to the illusory nature of the Black middle-class position as better-off. Visagie (2015) makes a similar finding, which suggests that those who are in the lower middle class experience some levels of financial deprivation. However, Rose's claim of no class difference contradicts traditional class distinctions such as those of Karl Marx (1974) which indicate that there is a distinction between the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie.

Contrary to Rose's conception, Punki and Qhawekazi shared that for them middle-class meant being in between the upper and lower class and this conclusion is a result of using their social context in determining class. This class schema comparison is also observed in (Phadi et al. 2011). In their study, 60% of their participants were of the notion that there are three classes in Soweto; lower, middle and upper class. Punki, holds an IT Diploma, is a data-capturer, breadwinner of both her immediate family and extended family and her husband is unemployed. Punki expounds on her understanding of Black middle-classness via using this social class juxtaposition. Punki states:

"I mean am not rich, am not either poor I am in the middle".

(Interview with Rose, December 2017)

Qhawekazi, is an Industrial relations specialist and her highest educational qualification is an MBL. Her husband is (Chief Officer) at their local police station. In addition to their salaried incomes they co-own two businesses a property rental business and a funeral parlour. Qhawekazi shares a similar view as Punki and argued that:

"It's not a high class it's not a low class it's a class that you can afford the basic things". (Interview with Qhawekazi, December 2017)

These responses are useful in indicating that Black middle-classness is not about being wealthy nor is it about being poor. Being Black middle-class denotes to be average or in the middle from a socio-economic perspective.

On the other hand, when going back to Mrs Peaches conception of the Black middle class a different understanding emerges of how societal pressure works to create a particular lived experience. Mrs Peaches extends her construction of Black middle-classness as follows:

“I need to do more I’m like I need to live in a better place, I need to buy a better car. I need... you just find yourself always needing to work so that you can be able to afford everything else that you have. And unfortunately that means that a lot of people are in debt because of the way that society pressurises us we end up saying as long as bangibona ngimuhle (as long as they see me beautiful) its fine but they don’t know that when I get home I have to be ticking did I pay this did I not pay that ... (Interview with Mrs Peaches, November 2017)

The pressure of appearances is central in the quote above. This pressure also creates a burden for Mrs Peaches to work more. On the other hand, her conception also suggests that to be Black and middle-class means to possess spending power or disposable income. Again, this alludes to the privileged position occupied by the Black middle-class, because they possess economic buying power enabled by employment in a country with high unemployment rates. However, what is worth noting here for a context into Mrs Peaches pressure is that at the time of the interview Mrs Peaches had just had a White wedding celebration. Again, she had just transitioned from being a single woman to being a married woman, from living with her parents and to moving into her own home and from her parents paying the household expenses, to being jointly responsible for paying the expenses with her husband and building a home.

The new home ‘needed’ furniture and home appliances, which all were bought upon the move. In addition, she had been in a car accident in the previous year, the car was written off and she ‘needed’ a car to travel from home, to work and to campus respectively. Thus, at first glance, the ‘needs’ she speaks about may mistakenly be interpreted as conspicuous consumption, however her life circumstances then compelled her to engage in fulfilling these needs. Her lived experience shows that it is

an erroneous evaluation to presume that the Black middle-class consume, for selfish gratification (Krige 2013), and for the sake of just spending money. Here we see that the transition from singlehood to be married carries a burden to accumulate the assets necessary to begin a home, which contributes to precarity.

The impression of precarity is brought to consideration when Mrs Peaches touches on the issue of not being enabled to afford some of the things and subsequently the debt incurred thereof. Krige (2013) illustrates that the Black middle class have an asset deficit because of the history of racialisation of access to resources. Therefore, filling this deficit might be mistaken for conspicuous consumption. Cronje et al (2010) supports the finding of high debt culture of the Black Middle-class incurred because of high levels of consumption resulting from attempts to address the asset deficit. On another note, Cronje et al (2010) is of the notion that the high debts experienced by the Black middle class is because of financial policies that allow easy access to credit, demographic trends and having too many dependents. Mrs Peach's response signals a point of departure from Cronje et al (2010) as she attributes the debt and materialism to social pressure to be perceived as doing well.

4.3 Affordability

Different incomes lead to differential affordability, which in turn creates diverse perceptions of what it means to be Black and middle-class. Moreover, the different incomes also shape what the participants think regarding what the Black middle-class can afford. To illustrate Rose and Punki are of the perception that middle-class people can only afford the basics, whilst Naria and Qhawekazi speak of middle-class people being able to afford needs and wants. On the contrary, Mrs Peaches argues that being middle-class means one can afford loans. As in (Phadi et al. 2011) affordability in this study was a key component in defining the parameters of the middle-class. Affordability is defined as the ability to obtain the necessities of life (Ngoma 2015).

4.3.1 Affording the Basics

Black middle classness was understood by Punki and Rose as a class that enabled its members to access the basic needs for living. The two responses suggest that deprivation is a defining feature of the Black middle-class for some. The perceived lack inferred refers to the inability to obtain wants and luxuries. Punki provides the following reason for self-identifying as middle-class:

“So, I don’t have the money to just waste. I have the money for the things I need so I consider myself in the middle because I can afford things needed in life”.
(Interview with Punki, December 2017)

To fully understand Punki’s conception of middle-classness, it is pivotal to draw out some biographical facts pertaining to Punki’s life that have come to mould her understanding of Black middle-classness. Multiple intersecting biographical factors from her personal life story are responsible for Punki’s perceptions of the Black middle-class being financially constrained. Firstly, her breadwinner status: Punki’s husband was unemployed when she was interviewed. Thus, coming from the position of a single-income household she may be experiencing financial constraints due to the family’s dependency on one salary. In addition, Punki has dependents outside of her immediate family. Therefore, both the obligation and responsibility she has towards her family of procreation contribute to her understanding of the Black-middle class position as being an existence characterized by living for necessities. Another factor to be considered is her financial reality. Her remaining salary income after deduction is R9,400. Her other monthly expenses amount to R6,118. Therefore, this means that after paying for her expenses i.e. $R9,400 - R6,118$, she is left with R3,282. This makes one understand why she states her inability to be financially wasteful.

The ability to control earnings and to afford life’s essentials are significant aspects to Punki in classifying herself as middle-class. Findings from (Phadi et al. 2013) support the above-mentioned finding that wage management and affordability are central features to those that occupy the middle-class position. For example, Jerry, a participant in (Phadi et al. 2013:156) explained the idea of not being wasteful in stating: “I am in the middle-class (Phakathi). I think I am able to control my salary...I do not overspend” (Phadi et al. 2013:156). Additionally, Charles also a participant in (Phadi et al. 2013: 156) comments as follows on being enabled to afford needs: “I have been

[middle class] for a long time, from birth because ...I am not a needy person that bothers others..." (Phadi et al. 2013: 156). However, a contrasting view to that of Punki was found from Hilda, a participant in (Phadi et al. 2013) regarding the theme of affordability. Hilda stated that being middle class meant affording wants and affording them without having to get credit.

Rose similarly holds the notion of the Black middle-classness being limited to accessing only basic needs. However, in contrast to Punki, even-though she self-identified as middle-class she considers the middle class to be just like those of low-income due to the financial constraint inherent in both experiences. Rose delivers her conception as follows:

"I think let me say for me middle class simply means someone who lives their daily lives from hand to mouth... I have a child, there are certain things you need to deny yourself in order to keep your head above the road, there are things that you would love to do like going on certain holidays but you can't... you need to do shopping for what you need and not what you want". (Interview with Rose, December 2017).

From the quote above Black middle-classness is understood as positioning one to afford needs and not wants. Most important in the quote above is the idea that one has to deny themselves what they want so that they can have what they need. This is what the Black middle-class experience looks like from Rose's perspective. Therefore, the two conceptions from Punki and Rose suggest that deprivation is a defining feature of the Black middle-class for some. Reasons for this deprivation have been argued to be a result of multiple factors, including the repercussions of easy access to credit and high interests on credit taken that leaves the Black middle class indebted (Makhothso 2009 and Burger et al 2015). These reasons link the financial constraints that the Black middle-class experience to structural issues such as South Africa's racist history, challenges with ethics in financial institutions and their policies thereof.

Thandiwe also illuminates the financial struggle associated with belonging to the Black middle-class position in the conception she provides. Thandiwe is a 28-year-old

woman. Together with her ex-husband they have two children. She used to be in a polygamous marriage. She was the second of three wives. Thandiwe, narrated a complicated story with a combination of a regressive and progressive narrative. The narrative is progressive in that in the midst of marrying as a teenager her husband introduced her to a life of privilege and provided for all her needs. The story is regressive in that he was again responsible for taking that life away upon deciding to terminate the marriage. She is resilient and now she has found her independence. By advancing her studies, holding two jobs and running her own business, she is able to hold her own. Thandiwe provides the following explanation on being Black and middle-class:

“Pressure that I am facing is making ends meet, sometimes it is disappointing in that I have people to feed and people that look up to me that is the only pressure I have. The only pressure of working too hard and trying to save so that when you grow old I do not have to suffer or to borrow monies... As you can see that, the economy of South Africa is not going anywhere...” (Interview with Thandiwe, December 2017)

From the quote above, to be Black and middle-class means to work hard in providing for one's family. The term makes ends meet as used by Thandiwe suggests that the financial obligations towards caring for one's family is not an easy endeavour, especially when one also has the goal of saving. From the narratives shared above, it is understood that low income is the main factor contributing to Punki, Rose and Thandiwe's conceptualisation of a financially struggling Black middle-class. These three participants all fell between the income bracket of R15,000-R20,000. However, this issue is not considered in isolation. Another related issue to be considered in conjunction with that of income is the participant's breadwinner status. All three women were breadwinners in their households; therefore, their experience of Black middle-classness as being marked with financial hardship is contributed by their households being dependent on a single member providing for the needs of all.

4.3.2 Affording the Pleasure's and Leisure's of life

Contrary to the conceptions shared above, Qhawekazi and Naria shared that they afford the pleasures and leisure's of life. They enjoy privilege within the middle-strata because their economic buying potential accommodates expenditure on wants. The afore-mentioned participants lead middle-class lifestyles that allow them the luxury of a holiday and eating out. As in Chevalier (2015) Black middle-class participants ate out at chain food restaurants at least once a week. It is thus evident that eating out is an activity enjoyed by some middle-class people. Qhawekazi shared the following on affordability and wants:

“The vacation you can still afford but not your 5 stars but 3 star you can afford. At least you can afford Spur or maybe Debonairs you know once a week” (Interview with Qhawekazi, November 2017)

It is interesting that in the quote above the affordability is still minimal as Qhawekazi is quick to illustrate that she is not talking about 5 star or 3-star dining. This suggests that even though there is a certain level of affordability there are still limitations. However, the experience of Naria illustrates another level of affordability of wants.

Naria holds a Diploma in Marketing and IT and an LLB degree. She co-owns a construction company and Law firm with her husband. Her husband is a qualified attorney. Naria similarly holds that eating out is an important feature she stated the following to illustrate:

“If my kids want McDonald today, they should be able to get it. I wanna be able to be comfortable, yah. Not just myself, my family as well. I shouldn't wonder where am I gonna get this for the next day/ thing, you know.” (Interview with Naria, November 2017)

Although Naria does not say much about levels affordability it is clear that she wants to eat out whenever the desire to do so arises, she does not want limitations and considerations that will limit her ability to satisfy her desires. The middle-class participants in Chavelier (2015) similarly to Naria were also accustomed to exploring dishes and food beyond those prepared in the domestic space. The take- away restaurants that were frequently visited by the participants in Chavelier (2015) are Wimpy, KFC and Steers.

4.3.3 Affording Debt

Being middle-class to Mrs Peaches meant being enabled to save money and to access credit. Cronje et al. (2010) support Mrs Peaches view in relation to debt but reveal a contradiction in relation to savings. Cronje et al. (2010) argue that the Black middle-class in South Africa has a culture of debt than one of saving. On the contrary, Mrs Peaches provides her justification for belonging to the Black middle class as follows:

“The reason why I say I am middle-class, I think being middle-class is being able to afford certain things, but you probably have to... It's either you have to save up really hard for them, or you are able to get a loan. So, when you are middle-class you are willing and are able to get a loan, that's another thing. Because, not everybody can get a loan. So, I think when you are middle-class somewhere, somehow you are able to get a loan.” (Interview with Mrs Peaches, November 2017)

From the extract above, it is apparent that accessing and affording credit is a crucial determinant for being Black middle-class. Makhotsho (2009) shows that government legislation such as the National Credit No Act 34 of 2005 and The Usury Exemption Notice of 1992 for example, enabled the access of credit to Blacks in South Africa. The benefit of this was that it enabled Blacks to acquire more possessions (Makhotsho 2009). However, the credit came with high interest, two thirds of the income incurred by the Black middle-class is used to pay back the debt (Makhotsho 2009). Cronje et al (2010) similarly agree with Mrs Peaches assertion of the Black middle-class being enabled to afford loans. They explain that this was enabled by financial liberalisation which began in the 1980's.

I consider the capability of being enabled to get a loan as both a privilege and potentially oppressing. It is a privilege because one can accumulate the necessary assets for living. For example, a house and a car. However, due to the high interest rates particularly to Blacks, it means that one's income will predominantly be spent on consolidating the debt as opposed to investing it in asset generating assets.

4.3.4 Education and Affordability

Education is and was valued amongst the Black middle-class in South Africa, both in Apartheid and post-apartheid periods, regardless of the cost. Mabandla (2015) explains that quality education was well-regarded among Mthatha's second Black Middle-class generation (1950's-1976) to the extent of supplementing salaries with income incurred from the land to pay for tuition fees. The desired outcome of investing in education was the acquisition of more land and ultimately increased wealth (Mabandla 2015). Similarly, with Qhawekazi who lives in a post-Apartheid period, quality education is significant.

Being Black middle-class according to Qhawekazi includes the ability to afford education that yields outcomes and values. Her preference is not based on lower costs but rather on the benefits of the education to the child. Research on the Black middle class confirms that access to good education is priority (Chipkin 2012; Zoch 2015). In Chipkin (2012) for example, this is observed in the manner that Busisiwe's parents (a participant of the study) used most of their profits from their dry-cleaning business to fund their child's education. This is because there is an understanding that education is a path to further access socio-economic resources.

Qhawekazi said the following to illustrate her point:

"I would recommend a certain school for my child but he will always want for the cheap. He (ex-husband) will always want what other people are doing. Without looking at the value, outcome or the output of the school that the friends are taking their child to on the opposite I am looking at the outcome the values of the school that my child will be benefiting." (Interview with Qhawekazi, November 2017)

In South Africa education was racialised during apartheid, therefore there is an understanding that if one wants a better education for their children they need to pay more for it (Southall 2016). To illustrate the racialisation of education and high cost of exclusive tertiary education during the Apartheid era the case of Aganang (a participant) in Khunou (2015) needs to be considered. Aganang had pursued her postgraduate studies in the University of the North (a historically Black University). Her application to enter an Honours programme declined on the basis that her degree was equivalent to a second-year course at Wits. This was one of the features of Apartheid engineering; the inequality between White and Black education was enabled by

Apartheid segregation legislation such as The Bantu Education Act of 1953 (Khunou 2015).

In order to afford education in this exclusive institution Aganang explains that all family income sources needed to be combined to pay school fees (Khunou 2015). Aganang mentions that the livestock sold from farming supplemented her father's teaching salary to pay for her tuition fees. This, therefore, shows that despite the high cost involved with education, Black middle-class parents from the second generation were not reluctant to pay the cost, see also (Mabandla 2015). Qhawekazi's response above suggests that the same value of highly regarding education, irrespective of the cost, holds for some third-generation Black middle-class parents. Access to middle classness for Blacks therefore comes with the ability to purchase education.

4.4 Gender, Work, Further Education, and the Pursuit of Social Mobility

Black middle-classness was understood and meant being highly educated and advancing as a professional to some participants of this study. My discussion here centres on addressing the subjective experiences and conceptions of Black middle-classness, particularly focusing on education and its use as a vehicle for social mobility. Interwoven within that dialogue is an exposition of the hidden dilemmas of what it means to be a Black middle-class woman pursuing an education in the context of marriage? Overall, the findings suggested that furthering studies was not an easy endeavour for five of the Black middle-class women in this study. It presented varying obstacles such as psychological ill-health, spousal and familial care neglect and a struggle in balancing study-life and work-life balance.

Qhawekazi, an Industrial relations specialist in senior-management holds several tertiary educational qualifications. She has the following credentials to her name: (1) a Diploma in Human Resource Management, (2) a B-Tech in Industrial Relations, and (3) a Master's in Business Leadership. In her description of middle-classness she stated that:

“Your job has a profession and it is sustainable because of your knowledge your academic qualification.” (Interview with Qhawekazi, November 2017)

Middle-classness according to the quote above is understood as one that requires those occupying the strata to hold a higher education qualification and be in professional employment. Makhotsho (2009) also argues that the Black middle-class are considered as professionals. However, there is a distinction between Qhawekazi's quote above and findings in Chavelier (2015). Here the label of middle-class was rejected and professional class was preferable. The middle-class label was rejected because most of the participants of the study felt that the term was associated with other related terms such as Black Diamonds and the negative descriptions attached to it (Chavelier 2015). Therefore, being labelled as a professional class spoke to their professional status, thus avoiding negative connotations (Chavelier 2015). Qhawekazi on the contrary, is not holding that there is a difference. Her response intertwined with that of Mashudu, implies that occupying a profession sustained by education qualifies one to belong to the middle class.

Mashudu's lived experience further illuminates and asserts the relationship between education and career sustainment. Mashudu is a 42-year-old Tswana speaking woman. She holds a certificate in Personal Management, a Diploma in Management and was studying towards a B.com degree in Financial Management when interviewed. She works at SACP as a Supply Chain Management Head. Mashudu narrates her professional and educational experiences as follows:

"I started registering for school and didn't relax and I studied very hard. I didn't relax. Then after 3 years I got a promotion...So in the police work when you start working you start from level 3. Then I jumped from level 4 to level 5 within 3 years of working. Then level 5 I worked in the component of Information and System Management 2006 again, I got another promotion. I jumped from level 6 to level 7...That's why I say I am a success at SAPS and now as we are speaking, I am a captain of SAPS. Then education wise...I registered and obtained a National Diploma in Management. I am busy now with my degree I have 2 years in computer science, National Diploma of Management and I have a certificate again in Personal Management that I obtained in Rau, now called UJ." (Interview with Mashudu December 2017)

A similarity is found between Mashudu and Qhawekazi's responses and Southall (2016) on the theme of education. Southall (2016) contends that those that were

considered as Black middle-class were educated both during the segregation and during democratic periods in South Africa. Therefore, from the lived experiences of Qhawekazi and Mashudu it is observed that continually studying even after having secured a job, shapes conceptions of middle-classness, such that the factors of education and profession are perceived as integral in identifying one-self as middle-class. However, the pursuit of education and career mobility for some Black middle-class women comes with much challenge.

Pertaining to the hardships in pursuing higher education and being a professional woman confronted by three Black middle-class women of this study, the following responses emerged. Qhawekazi shared that:

“I think it depends on the partner that I have chosen I’ve got certain goals you know in life you got to aim higher. I aim to be in a high class and my husband is not there for example I would study further. I am studying further and because I am studying, further he is not studying so he does not understand. For example, he would say let’s go to socialize then I cannot because my priority is to pass, is to achieve whatever I want to achieve and he is not there totally not there” (Interview with Qhawekazi, November 2017)

From this quote and Qhawekazi’s conception on middle-classness being defined through academic qualification, it is evident that the constant pursuit of education with the aim of upward mobility is significant to Qhawekazi. However, furthering her studies is challenging because of the lack of spousal support. Her husband expects her to spend time with him and other significant social others. Qhawekazi further elaborates on her priorities versus her husband’s expectations as follows:

“So, to me the priority is my job. Whatever the job demands from me I must adhere to that but to him is the opposite. The work must understand that I have got other responsibilities. I have got a family; I have got the in-laws which I need to attend to. Which I understand but I should oblige more to the work than him.” (Interview with Qhawekazi, November 2017)

The maintenance of middle-classness and the urge for upward class mobility produces work-life balance conflict. As a wife Qhawekazi’s is expected to fulfil certain responsibilities at home such as tending to her family’s needs, fulfilling tasks of care,

which include spending time with the family and attending to her in-laws. However, she considers work to be more of a priority in juxtaposition to the role she is expected to fulfil as a married woman. Findings from Seagal (2013) similarly show that working women often working more towards their careers often neglected their family needs.

Similarly, the account of Mrs Peaches shows that becoming pregnant induced depression because of the pre-meditated work-life conflict she would have to confront, as a Black middle-class woman, occupying multiple social roles. Mrs Peach's explanation of identifying with Terry and Diane a couple from the Tyler Perry film (Why Did I Get Married?) further shows the complicatedness of advancing education for women that are married. When interviewed, Mrs Peaches was in marriage for two years. Mrs Peaches is studying towards her Masters. Her partner is also pursuing his post-graduate qualification in engineering. Mrs Peaches explains her experiences thus:

“Dianne and Terry ... Dianne was like doing her thing like career and what not right and it clashes with her marital life and how she looks after her husband. And at the same time Terry seems to have his life in order he just wants to have time with his women at the same time. The reason why I identify with them is because I didn't want to have a child this year. Because, I wanted to get my Master's going... I just wanted to establish myself But God plans these things otherwise. But I feel my husband is going on with his life his going to work coming back and his pushing his books at the same time. And here I am trying to push my Masters and I am pregnant.” (Interview with Mrs Peaches, 2017 November)

Mrs Peach's narrative suggests that the pursuit of higher education and the goal of career advancement is challenging to some married Black middle-class women. Particularly, those that want to establish themselves within the domain of academics and work. In a South African study conducted amongst female academics, a similar view of pregnancy and childbirth slowing down work performance is reported (Seagal 2013). One Interviewee shared her experience as follows: “ If I compare myself with those that are around me. I've seen where a woman was single and had no children sort of on track with me, and then along the way they got married and had children um, it slowed them down considerably. I was able to climb faster because I don't have

other responsibilities ” (Seagal 2013:61). The challenge is being enabled to successfully meet the obligations of being a student and the obligations and responsibilities of mothering. Mrs Peaches articulates these fears and internal struggles as follows:

“I went into this mini-depression for the past few months because I felt like my life is at a standstill because now I am pregnant, I need to look after this baby, I need to look after myself and it was just crazy, that’s why I say I identify with them for those reasons because I also want to just establish myself in terms of my career my studies and actually advance myself. But you find that it does become a whole lot challenging when you think now, I have to have a child and I can only imagine what next year is going to be like.” (Interview with Mrs Peaches November 2017)

For these women, the dilemma is not only life work balance as there is a slight turn as their balance issues shifts attention from work-life balance to ‘life-study-work balance’. For Thandiwe, the challenge is in balancing work and studying. Thandiwe, is divorced and a single mother of two. Thandiwe is an entrepreneur and has two jobs. In addition, she also free - lances as a television host in the media industry. Thandiwe explains her dilemma as follows:

“In the middle of my working life I am studying as well, so it is not easy but because I have got goals that I want to reach I do focus so for three hours I have to work to see that my business is coming okay and whom should I contact because again I have to be sober for my work it is not like an office work but it is work that you have to work in order to establish my own business so it is not easy.” (Interview with Thandiwe, December 2017)

Thandiwe’s response suggests that entrepreneurial and educational advancement goals are important features of being Black and middle-class. Because the attainment of both goals holds a promise of wealth attainment, it can be argued that the constant pursuit of opportunities to advance one’s socio-economic status is an important indicator of middle classness. Moreover, from the quote above, contrary to the common work-life or work-family conflict predominantly experienced by women with family responsibility, it is observed that her conflict as a single-mother is focused on

responsibilities external to the domestic space and she is thus experiencing a study-work balance conflict (Seagal 2013).

The subjective experiences and conceptions of Black-middle classness shared above demonstrate that Black middle-classness, particularly when furthering one's studies is a difficult position to occupy. Because the women that occupy the position have multiple intersecting roles to fulfil. All these women have to simultaneously play out the role of mother, student, and career women. In some cases, as in Qhawekazi and Mrs Peaches, the additional role of businesswoman and wife needs to be considered. Moreover, all these roles are demanding because they need time to be effectively fulfilled. Thus, although deemed as important, pursuing higher education is challenging to these women when simultaneously carried out with other responsibilities.

4.5 Residence Location and Black Middle Classness

Residential location was perceived as an indicator of belonging to the middle-class strata. From the varied responses, varied personal life experiences and histories particularly one's geographical location or migration history, play an important role in shaping one's conceptions of middle-classness. Therefore, although residential location was signified for how one conceptualises their middle-class position, this was done differently, depending on life experiences.

For Mrs Peaches, being middle-class meant moving away from the township and relocating into the suburbs and for Qhawekazi being middle-class meant residing in town. A contrast is observed in Mashudu's response. Mashudu considers herself as being born and raised middle-class. She grew up in the rural areas and upon marriage relocated to Soweto. The findings below indicate the latter, because various meanings of Black middle-classness in relation to residential location had origins and spoke to where the participants had lived (personal history) and where they were currently living (present reality).

Mrs Peaches for example was raised in Ormonde and after getting married she relocated to Alberton North and presently resides there with her husband in an Apartment complex. From the construction and meaning of Black middle-classness that she offers below; I am persuaded that her conception is produced from the above-

mentioned residential shift (i.e. a move from Ormonde to Alberton) that took place in her life. Mrs Peaches states:

“And uhmm you are able to get away from those areas that look like... you not , you know like the townships like you are able to get away from them and you are able to afford like houses in your suburban areas , if it's not a house it's an apartment , so for me that says you are middle-class. In addition, unfortunately, sometimes you can't really afford it. Therefore, it means somewhere you need to work a little harder so you can afford it but you have to make ends meet. Because somewhere somehow, we are all running away from the townships.”
(Interview with Mrs Peaches, November 2017)

From the quote above, it is suggested being Black and middle-class means being able to afford relocating from the township to the suburbs. A similar finding is observed in (Chipkin 2012 and Krige 2013) whereby some respondents associated their middle-classness as a position that enables one to relocate to the suburbs. There was variation in the moving to suburbs. For some, it involved signalling status and mobility and for others as in (Krige 2013) it indicated exclusivity (see Chipkin,2012).

Within the South African context, embedded in a history of legalised racial oppression; the notion of runaway from the township that Mrs Peaches highlights, can be interpreted in several complementary ways. The ability to move away from the townships is indicative of the liberty of those belonging to the Black middle-class. Particularly, the freedom of movement to one's desired place of residence. Thus, it can be argued that being Black and middle-class in a democratic South Africa means one has access into spaces that were previously inaccessible under restricting Apartheid laws such as the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the Native Land Act of 1913. In so saying, the runaway from the townships to the suburbs is therefore also indicative of the privilege, power and economic empowerment enjoyed by some members of the Black middle-class.

I speak of residing in the suburbs in the context of privilege and power because scholars such as Fanon (1963:30) presented these spaces as awe-inspiring, appealing, beautiful, easy-going, well-fed and full of good things, designed for the privileged Whites. Moreover, suburbs in South Africa were intentionally designed to maintain the supremacy of the Whites and in the process distinguish them from the

natives. Therefore, for a Black person to reside in those spaces is indicative of the privilege accessed by the Black middle-class in contemporary South Africa.

However, what Mrs Peaches does not acknowledge is that other middle-class Blacks prefer to remain in the township and rather they renovate their houses (Krige 2013). Again, areas such as Diepkloof extension have houses that rival houses in many suburbs, thus the idea of running away from the township is not shared by all who consider themselves middle-class.

Mrs Peach's subjective meaning of Black middle-classness is also indicative of the de-racialisation of middle-classness in a democratic era. Thus, it can be stated that middle-classness is no longer determined by one's race. However, one's ability to afford as indicated by Mrs Peaches's response is more of a determining factor of belonging to the middle-class. Moreover, Mrs Peaches life story can also be figuratively viewed as the butterfly that breaks free from the cocoon (i.e. emancipation of Black struggle) emergent from the metamorphosis of governance or political transformation from Apartheid to democracy: The Black middle-class are now free to reside in spaces of their own choice.

Likewise, Qhawekazi shares Mrs Peaches view regarding the issue of residence, namely that the Black middle-class reside in towns which were also previously strictly White areas. Qhawekazi grew up in the township of Duduza and now resides in the town of Lydenburg in Mpumalanga. I am of the considered view that her construction of Black middle-classness is shaped from her present reality of residing in town. Qhawekazi states:

“Like the housing you know we stay in town but not in a big house.” (Interview with Qhawekazi, November 2017)

From both Qhawekazi and Mrs Peach's response, Black middle-classness is associated with residing in towns and suburbs. For Qhawekazi, her association with the middle-class as living in town could possibly emanate from the fact that she firstly resides in town and therefore because of her present reality she considers the middle-class to live in town. However, another possible explanation is that she works in Glencore, which is situated in Lydenburg, so her shift from the township of Duduza to Lydenburg may be strongly rooted in needing to be closer to her place of employment.

For Mrs Peaches on the other hand, the preference for suburbs seems to emerge from shifting from the historically marginalized township, that was a stigmatized place of poverty as observed in Krige (2013). Therefore, her move to suburbs is more of a status signalling indicator even though she does not mention it in the quote above. However, this is deduced in her earlier conception of middle-classness, wherein appearances were a central factor in her understanding of being middle-class.

Findings in Phadi et al. (2013) however indicate that some members belonging to the Black middle-class do reside in Soweto. Mashudu's response below shows that not all Black middle-class people prefer to reside in suburbs. Mashudu was raised in the rural area and presently resides in Soweto. Her conception of Black middle-classness indicates that she considered herself middle-class because her mother was enabled to educate her in the urban areas whilst residing in the rural areas. Mashudu explains:

“Although I grow up in the rural areas but I was in the rural areas not suffering because my mom was providing. I came to urban areas Johannesburg and started school. My mother was not afraid to take me to school. She was working alone but she made sure I don't suffer.” (Interview with Mashudu, December 2017)

Overall, on the subject of residence and what it means to be Black and middle-class, I am of the perception that where one was raised and where one resides determines their conceptions of what it means to be Black and middle-class. For example, Thato (a participant in (Chipkin 2012) who grew up in Soweto considered himself to be middle-class when his family advanced from living in a garage in Orlando to moving in a house in Diepkloof Extension in Soweto. In his own words he states: “ Compared to Orlando you can already tell the class difference” (Chipkin 2012:46). From the above example and Mashudu's conception of middle-class, it can be said that, some members determine their middle-class belonging from an evaluation of their social context within their situated residential areas.

4.6 Conclusion

From the discussions in this chapter it is clear that Black middle-classness is complex and as a result not easily defined. Also connected to the precarious nature of the position is the illusory nature of Black middle-classness. The illusion is created by the

ability to consume and thus the impression of riches that is created in a context of uncertainty. Even so, some of the lived experiences indicated that the appearance of riches through visible assets is in misalignment with the financial reality or the actual buying power held by those that claim the position.

Furthermore, this chapter illustrated that because being Black and middle-class is differentially experienced, the meaning thereof is differently constructed. Much of the meanings of being middle-class spoke to finances particularly what the participants perceived to afford. It was found that some of the Black middle-class members (of this study's) financial position allowed them only to afford the necessities in life whilst others enjoyed the luxuries of life. For those who were limited by finances found themselves needing to work harder to succumb to the societal pressure of having the better things in life.

Overall, the different meanings of Black middle-classness emerged because of the relative nature of truth. There exist many truths about what it means to be Black and middle-class. Since no person shares the same story as another, the varying conceptions of Black middle-classness emerged from what these eight participants conceived to be their personal truth about Black middle-classness as produced by their lived experiences.

Moreover, even though the participants of this study had similar characteristics such as race, sex, and class, they nevertheless had differential meanings of Black middle-classness. These meanings were determined by their personal biographies which is their personal truth. Thus, based on the latter premise and Intersectional principles, mainly of rejecting, single-axis logics and universal truths about what it means to be Black and middle-class I exit the chapter with this understanding: researchers conducting narrative research should expect to find myriads of meanings of Black middle-classness in their search of the subjective meaning of the term. In closing, I am convinced that the meaning of Black middle-classness is shaped by the intersection of context and biographical factors in essence a person's life story.

5. Why Did I Get Married? Marital Conflict and Intimacy

“The fundamental concept in social science is power, in the same sense in which energy is the fundamental concept in physics...The laws of social dynamics are laws which can only be stated in terms of power” (Russell 1938)

5.1 Introduction

There is consensus in the literature that marital conflict is the outcome of power struggles between men and women (Tichenor 2005; Fowler 2007, Engels 1988). Relationship conflict amongst heterosexual marriages occurs because of both subtle and overt male resistance towards the strong but often silenced female power manifesting in various forms within the domestic space. Power, in this thesis is demonstrated through the interactions between marital spouses, it is relational. The visible sites of power are seen in the one who makes decisions, the one who uses coercion to control, dominate and make the other act in accordance to their will furthermore power has sources that sustain and maintain it in marital relationships not all the sources are mentioned here but money, education and physical coercion were amongst the sources that emerged from the narratives. Drawing from Tichenor's (2005) conceptualisation of hidden power, I argue in the chapter that conventional gender ideology of masculinity and femininity at an institutional level, moulds gender identity constructions in ways that set expectations from one partner to the other. The failure of either spouse to meet these gender role expectations triggers marital conflict. Thus, the discussion on causes of conflict begins by drawing close attention to the expectations set by both women and men for men to be providers and the expectation set by men and women for women to be home-makers. These expectations leave the professional Black middle-class women conflicted intrinsically and extrinsically.

The argument of the chapter will be unpacked through a discussion of themes focusing on which situations trigger marital conflict, and which responses and resolution strategies to conflict follow. Furthermore, a detailed discussion of how intimacy is experienced in spaces of conflict will be provided. In addition, the chapter also contains accounts of the participants' relation to couples from Perry's (2007) *Why Did I Get Married?* A comparison of issues from the film to the experiences of those studied in this project is an integral part of the study. The presentation of the findings is as

follows: firstly, I introduce the story of each participant by providing a brief background about them, thereafter I present their lived experiences of marital conflict and intimacy to meet the study objectives.

5.2 Naria's Story

Naria identified with Marcus and Angela from Perry's (2007) *Why Did I Get Married?* Naria believes her marriage closely resembles this couple because of ceaseless arguments in her marriage, Naria explains:

"I am Angela and he is Marcus ... there's that close that never stops, like a constant fight, it's a constant passion, it's a constant, you know, of all those things." (Interview with Naria, December 2017)

In the film Angela is presented as a self-governing entrepreneur. Angela is frank. Her frankness is seen in her mockery of Marcus's unemployment. She is aware of the economic power she has over her husband; this is demonstrated during an argument they have in the car whereby she obnoxiously tells him that he is not going to leave her. She fiercely pounds the interior of the car and exclaims: "do you know why you aint going nowhere because this is my money" (Perry 2007). Both the action and exclamation indicate that she owns it because she bought it.

I therefore reach the conclusion that husband unemployment does not only contribute to marital conflict in African-American communities, but it has similar negative outcomes for South African couples as will be indicated in Naria's story. This conflict and change in gender roles are played out in Naria's experiences of conflict with her husband. The experiences of conflict show the embarrassment felt by her husband for not being the provider that he expects himself to be, in contexts when Naria asks for financial assistance from her family.

Sadly, despite the progress made by the South African government towards gender equality men continue to hold authority over women (Mphahlele 2011:94). Naria's life story illustrates that patriarchy reigns in South African marriages even in the face of male unemployment (Mtshiselwa 2015). Naria is a 34-year-old Northern Sotho speaking woman. She holds tertiary education qualifications in Marketing and

Software specialisation and an LLB. Her career started off as a flight attendant. She now co-owns a construction company and law firm with her husband. In the early years of their marriage her husband worked as an attorney. Within the first year of their marriage he resigned from work and remained unemployed for seven years.

The marital conflict that emerged in their marriage had its foundation in his unemployment status. Male unemployment is not a problem that is unique to Naria's partner. Unemployment in South Africa stands at 27.7 % (Statistics South Africa 2017). In addition, research show that unemployed South African men struggle daily through issues of a damaged sense of masculine identity and of maintaining their power (Mkhize 2006).

Researcher (Tichenor 2005, Gillspie 1971) has indicated that there are various sources within which power may be obtained by individuals within a marriage institution in heterosexual relationships. The following sources of marital power have been identified: socialisation, the marriage agreement, earnings, professional prestige, organisational participation, educational status, suburbanisation and the family life-cycle, it has been suggested that these sources have an impact on power distribution in marriage (Gillspie 1971). The story of Naria and her husband's paints the grim image of the conflict yielded that is consequential of a man that does not have a source of income as power.

As the plot unfolds, I came to understand two interrelated phenomena. Firstly, income as a power base gives one the ability to make decisions (amongst other things that will be expounded upon later). The conception of the decision-maker possessing power in marriage was proposed by Blood and Wolfe' in a study that focused on the understanding power and its measurement in marriage. According to Blood and Woolf in (Gillspie 1971: 446) " Operationally, power is restricted to who makes the final decision in each of eight areas, ranging from those traditionally held entirely by the husband to those held entirely by the wife. These eight areas include: 1) What job the husband should take. 2) What car to get. 3) Whether or not to buy life insurance. 4) Where to go on a vacation. 5) What house or apartment to take. 6) Whether or not the wife should go to work or quit work. 7) What doctor to have when someone is sick. 8) How much money the family can afford to spend per week on food" This criterion overtime has been critiqued as bias because it does not uncover certain kinds of power

which automatically accrue to the husband by virtue of his work; and second, that it takes no account of the differential importance of the eight decisions in the power structure of the marriage furthermore it does not exhaust all other areas of decision making that may occur in a household.

Nevertheless, of importance and what will be derived from Blood and Woolf (1960) for the discussion at hand is that there is that decision-making is an indicator of one possessing power. Power is therefore understood here as having an influence and final say in matters arising (This conception will be extended within and across narratives as the discussion progresses). Secondly, the loss of it makes one not only lose decision-making power however portrays the one without financial power as invaluable in being consulted when urgent matters arise and it is that process of being excluded and not consulted that leads to marital conflict but also threats to diminished manhood within marriage.

Naria's lived experience illustrates the impact of husband unemployment in marriage. Naria recalls an event where she asked for assistance from her uncle and how this enraged her partner. Naria accounts for the event as follows:

“And I had to call my uncle, and my uncle got there, because he was in Boksburg. So, he was there within ten (10) minutes, you know. So, I call him like my uncle is here and his answer was so weird. And he starts fighting with me, “like why are you calling your uncle now? I could have found another way” but I’m like I don’t have the time, I’m in a very busy road, it’s in the middle of nowhere. Someone is gonna bump me sooner or later, and I had to do something, you know. So how once again his ego is stripped. “I couldn’t do this for you, now you want to call your uncle, what’s your family going to think of me?” It’s always those, everything had an argument, everything boils down to that big elephant eventually.” (Interview with Naria, November 2017)

From the scenario above it is apparent that unemployment disables one from protecting and providing for one’s family thus threatening the loss of masculinity. Past studies on work and masculinity have shown that employment is significant for the social construction of masculinity (Mkhize 2006; Khunou 2006). Moreover, it has been argued that the loss of status that comes with losing a job manufactures frustration,

domestic difficulties and even the reassertion of manhood through wife battering (Khunou 2006). Naria recalls another similar event:

“So, going to work and knowing, okay there’s no petrol, like how the heck are we going to make it back, you know? And I call my mom and my sister, and they always help. That would upset him as well, knowing that there’s nowhere else to go but these people. You know? Rather ukuthi maybe azame (instead of maybe trying) or go to his parents but am letting the world to know what’s going on.” (Interview with Naria, November 2017)

In alignment with Foucault’s theorisation of power Naria’s husband resorted to controlling her behaviour as a power tactic. Namely: what or what not to disclose to relatives about his financial situation. Had he been successful in this control mission he would have maintained his masculine identity without threat. However, seeking assistance from relatives was seen by him as public disclosure about his inability to fulfil his responsibilities as a man. That unveiling could create an image of his failure as the head of house, thus depicting him as powerless. Thus, in efforts to maintain his power status given to men through patriarchy, he makes attempts to silence her. The conflict surfaces because Naria is resisting this oppression of determining her free will to act and speak. Therefore, this reinforces the assertion that marital conflict is power struggles between men and women.

Thus, from Naria’s story, one can see that the inability to adequately live up to conventional gender role expectations triggers marital conflict. Research (Tichenor 2005) has confirmed that the failure of men to fulfil the economic provider role causes tension amongst couples and kinsfolks. Research has shown that men that cannot provide for their families undergo feelings of inferiority, and embarrassment (Mzizi 2017).

Because, Naria’s husband is a Xhosa man who is an elder in the congregation. I am of the view that the intersection of Black culture, religion and gender produced the ideology of him being an authority figure in their family. It is through these societal structures that men yield their power (Mzizi 2017). And when they do not uphold the responsibilities that come with the privilege of being head of the family, they still want to keep their power. Hence, a solution to preserving power in the case of Naria’s husband is inhibiting the public declaration of his unemployment status. Even though

Naria contested suppressing his unemployment status, the conflict stirred an emotional response.

There exist gender differences in the expression of emotions particularly in stressful situations as in relationship conflict (Ryan and Branscombe 2013). Women are often known to display powerless emotions during intimate relationship conflict such as sadness, shame, guilt coupled with crying whilst men display strong emotions such as aggression and anger (Ryan et al. 2013). Women cry in conflict situations when they feel powerless (Ryan et al. 2013). Crying is a behaviour that strengthens inferiority. Another emotional state that has more often been reported among women is empathy (Baron-Cohen 2004). This means that when engaging with others that are suffering, women will assimilate themselves in those emotional dispositions. Similar to aforementioned studies, Naria's response to the argument about her husband being uncomfortable with her asking family members for money led her to empathy and tears. Naria explains:

"I really honestly looked at him and felt pity for him, it was sad, you know, to see this confident person who got his life together, now just melting away. And for me it was more, I didn't have strength to argue. I think I would just cry more than anything else." (Interview Naria, November 2014)

Crying has been considered as a symbol of helplessness because it indicates the inability to manage a situation (Ryan and Branscombe 2013). Although never tested, women's traditional gender roles are assumed to produce feelings of empathy, helplessness and powerlessness in marital conflict (Baron-Cohen 2004). This results in the view that feminine socialisation shapes the response to marital conflict.

Marital conflict is resolved by eradicating the source of the problem. In a study conducted amongst Malayan couples, it was reported that solving the problem was the second most preferred conflict resolution tactic. (Abdullah, Hassan, Harun, Nayan, Ahmad and Rosli 2017). During the time of her husband's unemployment, Naria similarly attempted to solve the problem by giving her husband control over her income. She states:

To be honest (sigh), me giving him financial power over my money, I think that; I mean he still talks about it today. When people ask him about things, he'd say

“this was what happened, my wife did this”. Cause even his own family was like “if you don’t get a job, she’s gonna leave you, she’s gonna” you now... So, giving him that I think, gave him that role back...(Interview Naria, November 2014)

Again, gender socialisation educates females to be relationally-orientated (Duck 1993). This includes maintaining harmonious relationships. The outcome of such teachings is evident in women’s conflict management tactics (Duck 1993). Furthermore, research found that females will make efforts to solve conflict problems in comparison to males to achieve harmony (Abdullah, Hassan, Harun, Nayan, Ahmad and Rosli 2017). Thus, Naria opted to give her husband financial power as this would maintain harmony. In spite of having ceased the fire, their battle altered her experience of emotional intimacy.

Race and Gender: The Black Church

The Black Church has played a significant role in the oppression of women. The Black church has a vital place in Black families and communities as emphasised in Lincoln’s quote, “religion is never far from the threshold of consciousness, for whether it is embraced with fervour or rejected with disdain, it is the focal element of the black experience” (Lincoln, 1999, p. xxiv).” Even so, this essential and ubiquitous institution of support is also very patriarchal (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Collins, 2005). It has been argued that the church’s key role in Black American lives has come partly at the expense of its devoted women (cf. Collins, 1990; Grant, 1982, 2004). Since, the missionaries brought along with them Christianity and bible teachings to Black South Africans it can be argued that the Black Church has a pivotal role in the lives of Black South Africans (Southall 2016). Churches and the men who typically head them (Grant, 2004) emphasize the gender binary and patriarchal relationships.

Women are expected to support this “politics of respectability” and are often censured if they do not seem to be doing so (Collins, 2005, pp. 107-108). The bible is used to support the notion that men should be in charge and that women should respect that arrangement. Because Black men have been thwarted in attempts to enact hegemonic masculinity by racist institutions, they seek out dominance over women in the spaces they do control like the Church and the home, Churches have been a major source of Black men’s control (though also of women’s resistance).

Both men and women are told that it is the responsibility of both women and men to “know their spiritually mandated, opposite, respective role and adhere to it so as to ensure that the family will remain together” (p. 35). That inevitably renders men privileged and women oppressed through the institution. Thus, in Naria’s narrative we can see that even though the husband does not have economic power, the other institutions such as the church and Xhosa culture maintain his dominance.

Intimate heterosexual relationships are sustained and maintained by money. Berliant (2011) supports this assertion by arguing that putting love and money in relationships can reveal the power to create and maintain social bonds. Consequently, the lack of finances contributes to a non-existence of emotional connectedness. Naria for example, confessed that during the time of her husband’s unemployment she did not possess feelings for him. This indicates that when there is no money there is no love. Naria admits:

“I think after that (pause), after that the petty, the anger and upset (sigh). During that time, I don’t remember feeling love or anything. Like it’s always, there’s a constant, there’s a constant struggle because we’d argue, and we’d resolve it and be okay, but because we have this big elephant in the room, constantly, I never felt okay.” (Interview with Naria, November 2017)

From Naria’s account it is implied that love is a dependent emotional condition to some and may be altered by marital disputes.

5.3 Punki's Story

Punki sees her marriage as a reflection of Terry and Dianne’s marriage from Tyler Perry’s *Why Did I Get Married*. Punki states:

“ Okay I see myself as couple two”. (Interview with Punki, December, 2017)

She goes on to explain her selection as follows:

“I think we do have some issues but I consider myself as a family, like I consider my husband as a family man. Like he is so responsible for many things so that’s why I consider us as couple two.” (Interview with Punki, December, 2017)

Punki’s identification with Terry and Dianne stems from the great significance her husband places on family life as observed in the film. Terry prioritises the family over work. This is observed in his requests for undivided attention from his wife on the drive to Colorado (Khunou 2013). And again, his requests that Dianne avails herself to their daughter by picking her up from school. The difference however between Terry and Punki’s husband is that Punki’s husband is a stay at home house-husband whilst Terry is a professional. Even though Punki does not mention that they argued about him requesting her to spend more time however, Punki like Dianne feels entitled to make decisions about the religion of her choice without his consent. This issue of making-decisions that do not include her husband is the basis of their conflicts.

Similar to Naria, male authority prevails even when men cannot live up to the provider role. I, therefore contend that marital conflict arises in spaces where men attempt to maintain the dominant figure status and women resist or attempt to escape such dominance. This view is supported by Foucault’s (1976) assertion that power relations create a space for the possibility of resistance.

Marital conflict for Punki occurred because of religious differences. Punki’s husband disapproves on her religious practices and Punki insists on performing them. Punki is a 35-year-old, Zulu speaking woman. She holds a Diploma in Information Systems. She is presently employed as a Data Capturer. At the time of the interview Punki had been with her husband for 3 years. They have a child together. Punki’s husband is unemployed. Punki is a Jehovah’s Witness and preaching from house to house is compulsory. In the early days of their marriage her husband did not approve of her faith and this contributed to relationship conflict. Punki remarks as follows on the matter:

“Okay even though he was the man of my dreams we do have challenges. The challenge was my religion like my religion is a very strict religion so when I told him that I am a Jehovah’s Witness that was stressful for him because there

were certain things he knew that were not true you understand?...so I had to tell him about my religion like we do house to house which was uncomfortable for him like back then I was a girlfriend like I will have to knock in the houses like what will his friends say? So, it was a huge conflict because to me it was a part of my life. It's not a choice or option its part of my life to be a Jehovah's Witness. We fought a lot about my religion." (Interview with Punki, December 2017)

Religion posit that males are the decision-makers in the domestic space (Tichenor 2005). The decision as to which religion a family should follow is usually decided by men. Thus, because a woman refuses to reject her beliefs because of the disapproval of her husband, results in conflict. Religious differences can be an area of conflict when the spouses are from different religious affiliations and there is a practice that one partner does not understand about their significant other's religious rituals. Therefore, it is evident that matters of faith too can result in the emergence of conflict in a marriage. Research has suggested that inter-faith marriages are vulnerable to a breakdown (Radebe 1983:109).

5.4 Mrs Peaches Story

Mrs Peaches identified with Terry and Dianne from the film, *Why Did I Get Married?* In the Tyler Perry film Dianne is a high-achieving lawyer who has just been made a partner at her law-firm. Dianne's struggles to maintain work-life balance is the cause of much of the arguments in her marriage. It is Dianne's high feminist ideals that put her at risk of losing her husband. She makes an argument that the process of conceiving and raising a child disadvantages a woman as opposed to a man in terms of career advancement because ultimately, it is she who must carry the child and miss out on work, thus missing out on an opportunity for career growth (Perry,2007). In the same vein, Mrs Peaches felt that her pregnancy would hinder her progress. Mrs Peaches explains why she identifies with Dianne as follows:

"Dianne and Terry neh. Because...Dianna was like doing her thing like career and what not right and it clashes with her marital life and how she looks after her husband. And at the same time Terry seems to have his life in order he just wants to have time with his women at the same time. The reason why I identify

with them is because I didn't want to have a child this year. Because I wanted to get my Master's going, I needed this thing to flow I needed it to move and I just wanted to establish myself because I would have had, this year to push my Masters... But I feel my husband is going on with his life his going to work coming back and his pushing his books at the same time. And here I am trying to push my Master's and I am pregnant." (Interview with Peaches, November 2017)

Mrs Peaches's story depicts the challenges faced by working women in marriage. It shows the difficulty of attempting to pursue work and success in the boundaries of being a wife and mother. Social studies identify the phenomena described above as work-life balance (Clark 2000 and Nieslan Survey 2011). Work-life balance is a crucial issue as the dual-career family has become the norm (Clark 2000). Nevertheless, being involved in professional employment does not excuse women from their domestic duties. Moreover, research (Nieslan Survey 2011) suggests that working and married female participants lack time to enjoy other activities.

Furthermore, the case of Mrs Peaches shows that disharmony is yielded when one wants to post-pone plans to grow one's family for the advancement of academic and professional goals. Mrs Peaches is a 26-year-old, Tsonga speaking Black middle-class woman. She holds the following tertiary educational qualifications: BA (Journalism), BA (Honours) and is presently reading towards her Masters. Mrs Peaches is an entrepreneur offering educational services. At the time of the interview she was married for two years and had one child. Mrs Peaches feels that her husband does not comprehend her internal conflict. She further explained that:

"I really feel like he does not know what is going on inside of me. The need like...but I can't even have kids. And the funny thing is that, actually it's sad. The sad thing is that you get to a point where it takes time to connect or even really start to fall in love with the fact that you are expecting. I'm like six months pregnant and like it's only probably now that I'm like ncooh I'm going to have a baby. Oh my gosh but all the other three months I was like no, no it's not happening. Like you know you wish you can wake up and it's like a dream and you like yay let me go do my work. So that's why I said I felt into this mini

depression where I was crying all the time.” (Interview with Peaches, November 2017)

Conventional gender role expectations require women to assume the identity of homemaker (Tichenor 2005). This requires that she spends time tending to the domestic labour at home, cooking and bearing children. However, with the advent of a capitalistic economy, women were welcomed to work for salaried employment beyond the home. The latter presents varying challenges for the family as participation in public labour makes it hard to maintain domestic work and prioritise goals of extending the family which then is a basis for conflicts at home (Fowler 2007; Engels 1988: 21). Therefore, I maintain that the inability to fulfil gender role expectations contributes to marital conflict.

5.5 Angie's Story

Angie identified with two couples from *Why Did I Get married?* She explains that at the beginning of the marriage she identified more with couple 1 (Mike and Sheila) and at the present moment she identifies more with couple 3 (Terry and Dianne). Angie explains her identification to two couples from the film as follows:

“Mmm I identify myself with.....(Giggles), okay can I tell you in my... in my life, ever since I got married neh (right) I will maybe pick two .When I started out I started out as couple 1 myself but now I ended up being couple three.”
(Interview with Angie, November 2017)

The unfolding of Angie’s narrative shows that she enters marriage, from a position of financial deprivation and becomes empowered through the acquisition of higher education qualifications and employment. This economic empowerment transforms her from a quiet and submissive wife to what she considers an outspoken character. Having mentioned this, her identification with a suppressed Sheila to a bold Angela are of no surprise.

Education is a source of power in marriage. In Gillspie (1971) it is argued that education was also influential in the distribution of power; in this study the aim was to investigate the factors that reinforce male authority in heterosexual marriage. The findings indicated that the more education the husband has, the greater his power.

Furthermore, high white-collar husbands continue to gain power if they exceed their wives' education and they lose it if they fall short of the wife. Angie's narrative suggests that she only felt empowered to express herself in her marriage post her education prior to that she was silent and submissive to her husbands' will over the matters in their life. Therefore, education empowers women to have a voice, thus power in a marriage context is demonstrated by having the courage to express one's thoughts.

The power that Angie gained as a result of being educated had a positive impact. Because she communicated her thoughts better and more honestly, and openly in her marriage. Foucault is one of the few scholars who recognise that power is not just a negative, coercive or repressive thing that forces us to do things against our wishes, but can also be a necessary, productive and positive force in society (Gaventa 2003: 2): 'We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production' (Foucault 1991: 194).

Angie begins to explain her identification with Sheila and Mike by transporting the audience to her early years of marriage. She does this by firstly explaining the type of women she was in the marriage. She states:

"And I became that kind of a woman you know obeying, respecting husband and staff like that, so I don't know... in a way I will say I don't na personally I will take it that he took advantage of me". (Interview with Angie, November 2017)

She further explains the implications of that nature on her partner's behaviour towards her. Angie is of the notion that her husband took advantage of her because he took her out of the rural areas and was responsible for her class elevation. She explains:

"So, coming back to your question of what made him think he could take advantage of me maybe because of the situation that he took me out of, so he was like since I think have ownership over her she is not going to tell me and she is not going to go back home. Because we are still in the process because

if I go back they will so hawu we thought the boy was going to take you to school what is happening so in my head I'm like I must achieve get this thing that I wanted to get before I could even make noise and stuff. So hence I am saying I think he took advantage of me that time." (Interview with Angie, November 2017)

In the film *Why Did I Get Married?* Sheila just like Angie is a submissive wife, who is seeking to impress her husband. Mike on the other hand, mistreats her. Similarly, Angie's husband also mistreats Angie. Sheila is oppressed and emotionally broken because she is stuck in an unhappy marriage and unemployed. She therefore survives on the economic provisions of Mike. It appears that she does not have higher-education qualifications because it is never mentioned and additionally, she confesses to Troy that she "has no life without him". The reader need not interpret these as romantic assertions; Sheila has no marketable skills. In Angie's story we also find her starting marriage without tertiary education or employment.

The reader is invited to view Sheila's relationship with Mike as a representation of the outcome of women's financial dependency on men. Women that are economically dependent on men, particularly in marriage, are highly susceptible to experiencing various forms of abuse because of the economic power their husbands possess over them. Examples of these forms of abuse from the film are seen in Sheila allowing Mike to mock her weight and bringing her friend and his girlfriend on a trip, and sexually withdrawing from her. The pages to follow show how Angie was subjected to similar emotional abuse which formed the basis of her arguments. The difference however, between Angela and Sheila is that despite the marital conflict experienced by Angie, physical intimacy continued. Next, Angie provides an explanation for identifying with Angela. Angie states:

"So, as I have stated what happened in first couple that's how I used to be that quiet girl. So now I became this third couple I'm this talkative person in the marriage I say my mind if something is wrong...Bona If the leg stinks today, I'm like yho babe your legs are stinking".(Interview with Angie, November 2017).

This outspoken character emerged immediately after she obtained her educational qualifications and became employed. Thus, I reach the conclusion that financial freedom gave her a voice in her marriage however, as will be seen in the exposition

of her marital conflicts below, even though she gained her voice her husband now oppressed her through emotional abuse, so as to still maintain power over her.

Thus, it is now visible that female economic dependency on males has contributed to oppression of some women in marriage. Angie's life story demonstrates the various forms of abuse she had to tolerate in her early marriage due to her economic vulnerability. Angie's marital story is a story depicting atrocities executed by men that have financial power over women. In a South African report on Violence Against Women in South Africa: A country in crisis (2017) it was proposed that to prevent various forms of abuse and oppression against women, there is a need to increase women's economic empowerment because unemployment, lack of funding and resources are a barrier to exiting abusive relationships (Sibanda-Moyo, Khonje and Brobbey 2017).

Angie is a 32-year-old Northern Sotho woman. She holds a tertiary education qualification in Accountancy. She presently works at the City of Ekurhuleni at the department of Social Development and is also an entrepreneur. At the time of the interview, Angie had been together with her husband for 12 years with one child together. Angie's narrative is a progressive one in relation to her personal development. It appears that after she achieved the goal of being married, her social status increased as she achieved her educational qualifications and gained financial independence, even though the story of her personal development is progressive, she nevertheless narrates a regressive story in which life events are problematic and move her character away from happiness to a life filled with tension due to marital problems.

Adultery and disrespecting one's partner are situations that stimulate the occurrence of marital conflict. Research agrees that infidelity in relationships contributes to emotional distress and leads to relationship collapse (Anderson 2012). Infidelity in this study emerges from an intention of both asserting masculinity and oppressing a woman. Angie for example does not want her husband's girlfriends to call him when he is at home with her. Angie states:

"When I met him there were those friends... girlfriends uyabona (you see), so in a way wena (you) you didn't know their friendship; how it ends, where it starts. But those people will call while I was there uyabona (you see) those conversations deep. Sometimes he can't talk sometimes he has to lie to them

saying ukuthi (that) I'm alone and I'm there. So obviously in your mind you thinking ukuthi (that) how kanti this person didn't he tell the other person that he is married. Or, you not supposed to call me at certain times and things like that. So that's why I'm saying I think he took advantage of me. As a woman nah I told him ukuthi you know what I think some of your conversations I think they are sort of hurting. So, I don't think it's time... I think you need to set rules tell them that okay you cannot speak to me at certain times. Just to respect me. But this thing continued..." (Interview with Angie, November 2017)

Angie's experience with her husband as illustrated above indicates disrespect and disregard. The reasons for this disregard are because of her family of orientations, low socio-economic status and her then unemployment status. Again, Angie's gender behaviour socialisation contributed to Angie's husband taking advantage of her. Firstly, Angie's parents from the rural areas of Free-State could not afford to pay for her tuition fees. Secondly, she was unemployed and only possessed a matric. Thirdly, she was raised to be obedient to her husband. As time went by Angie obtained her qualifications and started her career. South Africa is a country where patriarchy and other systems of oppression continue to overlap with severe socio-economic realities bearing profoundly on Black women. With her now new gained economic power, she had another battle to fight, the battle of emotional abuse.

Angie's experiences of emotional abuse result from derogatory remarks from her husband. These remarks are a continuation of the disrespect he had been showing her in the early days of their marriage. Female oppression in marriage maintained by derogatory remarks not only damages the female psyche but contributes to marital conflict (Mesatywa 2014) In Angie's case for example, the conflict is triggered by condescending remarks. An argument was ignited by negative remarks concerning her grooming. Angie accounts:

"His always trying to break you to keep you at your level. I don't know he will say something that will obviously make you feel down like did you see your hair before uphapha, did you see what you are wearing or something. So, saying something that obviously will make you feel low, his like its fine you are enjoying yourself its fine most people don't see that but I saw it. So, in you he says tha"t. (Interview with Angie, November 2017)

Verbal abuse administered by men towards women is associated with controlling and power maintenance behaviour. In Angie's case her husband mentally controls her perceptions of her self-worth, by insulting her physical appearance. He thus gains power by having the ability to influence her perceptions to the point where she is degraded by his comments. Research confirms that the emotional downfall of the victim increases the offender's power (Mesatywa 2014). Thus, it is seen again that marital conflict occurs in attempts of men to oppress women.

Female suppression in Angie's marriage is evident in the communication interaction during conflict. Enforcement of one's convictions through argumentation is a strategy used to resolve conflicts. Research suggests that this strategy of handling conflict is known as competition (Tom, Foo, and Lim 2011) It is grounded by the win-lose outcome. Adversely, arguing through an aversive manner until one party gives in is injurious to relationship well-being (Tom et al. 2011). Angie for example, states that her husband's approach to their conflicts is to argue until he wins and she gives in. To illustrate, Angie shares a conflict experience at an Auditors function:

"To cut the story short, in our arguments, I'm the one who makes peace with things. He never...Even today I've never heard him say sorry, into something even if he is wrong. He will want to argue until yena he wins so in most cases he knows that he wins..."(Interview with Angie, November 2017)."

From the quote above it is evident that Angie's partner depicts the following characteristics in handling conflict: dominance, competition, unapologetic and is argumentative. These converge with masculine behaviours and gender role expectation. Masculine socialisation elicits dominant communication tactics that contribute to the powerlessness felt by women during conflict (Duck 1993).

Gender and Emotions in Conflict Resolution

Women have a significant role in maintaining the peace and emotional health in marriage. The influence of emotional caretaking is under examined in studies of marriage, particularly on the gendered dimensions of emotional care-taking. Erickson (1993) suggested that this may be because of the vast conceptualisations that have been used to identify it over time: such as 'emotional sustenance, the socioemotional role, and the expressive role (p. 889).

Maushart's (2001) terminology for it, wife work, reflects that regardless of other transformations in families, managing emotions is associated to women's family roles as wives and mothers than to the roles of father and husband (Wharton & Erickson, 1993, p. 7). Using survey data from 335, married parents, Erickson (2005) found that emotion work is linked to the construction of gender even more than housework or child care; wives in her sample tended to perceive emotional support as an aspect of their family work role in a way that husbands did not (see also Croyle & Waltz, 2002).

Because women of all racial/ethnic and social classes are socially constructed as more emotionally adept than men, a wife is more likely to bear responsibility for the emotional quality of a relationship and for helping her husband to understand both her emotional responses and his own. Cancian's (1986) analysis of the feminization of love is informative in comprehending how relationship maintenance is constructed as women's work. Thus, the feminization of love strengthens the expectation that women will be in charge of managing their marriages.

Gender differences exist in conflict management styles because of gender differentials in socialisation. Women are traditionally socialised to define themselves within the context of relationships and reject personal interests for others (Wood et al. 1993). In addition, women's early primary socialisation encourages them to favour accommodating and peace-making strategies. Thus, Angie's tactic of offering peace to solve conflict indicates conformity to gender socialisation.

Furthermore, conflict resolution strategies that involve verbal aggression exacerbate marital conflict (Tom et al. 2011). In Angie's case, her husband has a fight response in conflict management which is contrary to previous works that claimed that in the fight-or-flight pattern common to most animals, men are likely to take flight, whilst women are willing to fight (Pearson 2001). Arguing one's position is an ineffective way of resolving conflict because it merely silences the other partner meaning that one's concerns remain unresolved.

From Angie's narrative of overwhelming male dominance and unresolved conflict it was surprising that the exchange of physical and care-giving intimacy was never

disturbed. Marital Conflict does not alter the physical intimacy and care provided by women towards their husbands. The latter echoes findings in Kim (2013) that confirm that physical intimacy is a tool used by some couples to resolve conflicts. The outcome is restoration of peace in marriage (Kim 2013). The absence of physical intimacy is reported to contribute decreased marital satisfaction which may result in marital breakdown. Angie states:

“After an argument (shyly giggles), honestly, I don’t know if you have experienced it kappa you have heard it from other people. Love making sort of, so you know in most cases its either you make love or something. His not the person who likes to speak in bed, so he does not want to talk about anything, so I will start it, by touching him, I don’t know the response will be like, I forgive you or something, then that thing will start then obviously in the morning everything is fine.” (Interview with Angie, November 2017)

Angie’s experience alludes that physical intimacy has restorative power for conflict in marriage. This finding echoes the results from Lee and Park (2008) and means that sex and physical touch have the function of strengthening solidarity and promoting positive emotions in marriage. Angie further explains:

“With us whether we have argued or something. There is one thing that I can be honest with you. at home, whether I am angry or not we eat, at the normal time. Uhm cleaning, I keep my laundry, I still do it. Our sex life, we don’t miss the part...” (Interview with Angie, November 2017)

Marital conflict from Angie’s experience therefore does not hinder sexual expressions of intimacy. Furthermore, this account suggests that physical intimacy following conflict has the power to defuse the problem.

5.6 Qhawekazi's Story

Qhawekazi did not identify with any of the couples from *Why Did I get Married?* However, upon analysis of the narrative she provides, she does share similar problems with a character in the movie. For example, the emotional abuse and infidelity she experiences mirrors Sheila’s marital life. Qhawekazi’s marital story shows that women that are more financially empowered than their husbands endure multiple

hardships (Tichenor 2005). In the passage below it will be shown how Qhawekazi's financial success was at the root of her marital conflict and threatened the masculinity and power of her husband. Consequently, it is observed in Qhawekazi's marriage that threats to masculinity produce various forms of abuse and infidelity, physical violence and high alcohol consumption. These behaviours are typical gender norms associated with masculinity. I thus argue that engagement in these gender behaviours maintains male power and female oppression in heterosexual relationships (Njezula 2006).

Qhawekazi is a 42-year-old woman. Her highest educational qualification is an MBL (Master's in Business Leadership). She is working as a senior manager at Glencore in the department of Industrial relations. At the time of the interview she had been married for 13 years, with one child. Qhawekazi owns a funeral parlour business and property business. At the time of the interview she was separated from her husband and was seriously considering divorce. The section below accounts for the cause, response, and resolution of marital conflict experienced by Qhawekazi, followed by a discussion on the implications of conflict on discursive intimacy.

Male alcohol abuse results in quarrels between marital partners. A study on intimate partner violence reveals the link between male alcohol consumption and relationship conflict (Miles, Herstad, Shand and Muzenda n.d.). The study further illustrates that 45% of men and 20% of women were drinking during episodes of intimate partner violence (Miles et al. n.d.) Moreover, in 2006 in South Africa, 70% of domestic violence cases were linked to the consumption of alcohol (Miles et al. n.d.) Qhawekazi shared the following on alcohol abuse:

"What I was expecting from him is when it comes to the cars I mean for the household things like food, like rent like the alarm like anything that has to do with us you know sleeping like we would go 50/50....now because of consumption, alcohol takes more time, alcohol takes more finances, alcohol creates unfaithfulness." (Qhawekazi, Interview held on the 24 November 2018)

Much of the disputes in Qhawekazi's marriage had their origins in alcohol consumption. Her expectation was that they would go 50/50 on shared household costs. However, her experience was that she had to carry more of the load. Research shows that men engage in high consumption of alcohol to display manhood characteristics (Peltzer, Davids and Njuho 2011). The high alcohol consumption is

done with the hope of preserving their masculinity which is under threat because of the financial empowerment of women (Schuler, Enzi, Badal and Nazeen 2018). In addition, dominant masculine gender norms are pursued through male involvement in activities such as violence, high risk sexual activity and the use of alcohol (Peltzer et al 2011). Male alcohol consumption often leads to domestic violence and the oppression of women.

Furthermore, alcohol abuse among men, as well as intimate partner violence, is often a manifestation of underlying need for power and control related to gender-based distortions and insecurities (Jewkes 2002). Since this power cannot be maintained through the traditional conception of men being the primary breadwinners, it is also preserved in over-doing masculine gender norms of high-risk sexual practices. Infidelity was another cause for conflict in Qhawekazi's marriage. Research on marital conflict has also confirmed that marital disharmony can occur over adultery (Dillion et al. 2018). Qhawekazi remarks are as follows on infidelity:

“for example if I accidentally come to encounter his personal phone I will meet all these girlfriends talking to him exchanging I love you, I love you and his disappearance and I find other people telling me I saw your husband walking with a girlfriend somewhere, you understand when I confront him he will deny and he will try all the means to stop me from trying to know more about what happened ... and even if I can find strong evidence after the separation I found strong evidence to say he was sleeping with a girlfriend in my house. He denied totally denied which I believe if that I found it while I was still with him, he was gonna beat me but because now I stay on my own and he is on that thing he would rather deny which would really make me sick again.” (Interview with Qhawekazi, November 2017).

Infidelity in the case of Qhawekazi's husband is a way for him to assert his masculine power in the context of financial disempowerment. Qhawekazi's professional, financial and educational success far outweigh his own and he is disempowered by this. Qhawekazi's experiences are in alignment with previous work that shows that among the Tsiamane, more conflict occurred over the husband's infidelity and his division of resources (Stieglits, Gurven, Kaplan and Winking 2012). Infidelity not only causes

conflict but contributes to conflict responses that reveal the on-going theme of financially empowered women being oppressed in marriage.

Marital Conflict alters experiences of discursive intimacy. Qhawekazi explains that in her marriage discursive-intimacy in the absence of conflict is maintained by calling her partner daily from work to check on his well-being. Research confirms that the cell-phone is an essential device to establish, sustain, and maintain intimate relationships (Bradford 2016). However, amidst conflict, Qhawekazi chose to refrain from telephone communication. Qhawekazi reported that:

“don’t feel like I must do it. In fact, I feel like if I talk to him, I will be stressed more. Let me rather neglect it. (Interview with Qhawekazi, November 2017)

Early primary socialisation urges females to be feminine (Duck 1993). Within the domain of communication, particularly in the context of relationships, the girl child is raised to adopt and uphold the following values: co-cooperativeness, respect, relational orientation and harmony (Davies 2010). In addition, past studies show that women who uphold feminine engendered communications (Davis 2010) have a reputation of employing passive destructive approaches in response to relationship conflict (Davis 2010). The conflict behaviour that characterizes the passive destructive approach is avoiding or ignoring the other person (Davis 2010). This is done in the hope of maintaining peace. Furthermore, it is done to avoid confrontation, argumentation and anger outbursts synonymous with masculine engendered interpersonal communication patterns (Duck 1993).

Therefore, Qhawekazi’s choice to avoid communication is the outcome of gender socialisation and conformity to the feminine identity that comes with it (Duck 1993). However, gender is not the only contributing factor. A history of domestic violence also influenced Qhawekazi’s resolution of withdrawing from mobile communication during conflict to preserve peace and harmony.

Past experiences of physical abuse induce fear in women. Qhawekazi for example, had attempted to voice out her concerns previously in other disputes; the consequences of communicating during conflict lead to violence. Qhawekazi provides an example:

“He will go and get drunk. when he is back, he will try to do anything like for example I forgot to close the garage door. He will beat me. That thing happened quite a number of times...neh but I have realised to say the pattern it has to link with me asking his where about or where he was from 3H00 up until 12H00... the response then he will vanish, then when he comes back and then he will create something then he will beat me”. (Interview with Qhawekazi, November 2017)

Intimate partner violence can only be comprehended if one first understands the construction of masculinities (Schuler, Lenzi, Badal, Nazneen 2018). Intimate partner violence is both an aspect of masculinity and means for men to control women (Schuler et al. 2018). Thus, Qhawekazi's decision of remaining silent signifies oppression caused by the fear of domestic violence. Qhawekazi's marital history of domestic violence inhibited the possibility of her communicating and openly discussing matters with her husband because of a fear of being battered.

In addition, Komarovski is one of the few sociologists who has mentioned physical coercion as a source of power in the family. In her discussion of the low blue-collar family, she found that the use of physical violence was a source of masculine power. However, not only the use of physical violence, but its threat can be an effective form of control. Lynn O'Connor has suggested that threats of violence (in gestures of dominance) are not limited to any particular class, but are a universal source of male power (Gillspie, 1971).

Thus, to avoid potential harm, she protects herself by keeping quiet and not calling him. At the end, I contend that the intersection of her biography (gender primary socialisation) and history (marital history of abuse) contributed to the repression of her voice in interpersonal communication. The fact that Qhawekazi was overpowered by her husband meant that it would be hard for her to resolve the matter without assistance.

Marital Conflict can be resolved by involving external parties. In Qhawekazi's case for example, family intervention and reliance on legal personal (police) assisted in solving an occurrence of marital conflict. Spaumer (2017) in a study conducted amongst

married couples in Pretoria showed that seeking mediators in a conflict management strategy is used in African communities in cases where spouses fail to reach consensus on a matter. Possible mediators cited are friends, family, a priest, and a counsellor (Spaumer 2017). Qhawekazi explains as follows:

“Yes, there is number of approaches after a quarrel everything has to do with the pressure. After the pressure from the family. Ok let me explain like this he will come back at 12H00 for example it started after the baby he would start coming back late drunk and so and so abusing then I will challenge that, I will approach him to say what you are doing I don't like it then we not really reaching any conclusion. The family will come intervene because if it's beyond my call I escalate it. The family will come and talk to him and it will, I would say make sense to him ok after that he will make an improvement he will make an improvement after that which is feel it's a pressure from the family or from the police or any other external source.” (Interview with Qhawekazi, November, 2017)

In the case above Qhawekazi's means to resolve the conflict through family mediation did cause a change in the person's behaviour. According to Michael Foucault (1980) her means were a manifestation of power because they affected / shaped his behaviour, therefore he allowed himself to be acted upon. This happened without repression and this is understanding that Foucault had of power. The quote below extracted from Foucault's discussion with Michael Bess from 1980 conveys this conception as follows:

“Power should not be understood as an oppressive system bearing down on individuals from above, smiting them with prohibitions of this or that. Power is a set of relations. What does it mean to exercise power? It does not mean picking up this tape recorder and throwing it on the ground. I have the capacity to do so – materially, physically, sportively. But I would not be exercising power if I did that. However, if I take this tape recorder and throw it on the ground in order to make you mad, or so that you can't repeat what I've said, or to put pressure on so that you'll behave in such and such a way, or to intimidate you – well, what I've done, by shaping your behaviour through certain means, that is power. ... I'm not forcing you at all and I'm leaving you

completely free – that’s when I begin to exercise power. It’s clear that power should not be defined as a constraining force of violence that represses individuals, forcing them to do something or preventing them from doing some other thing. But it takes place when there is a relation between two free subjects, and this relation is unbalanced, so that one can act upon the other, and the other is acted upon, or allows himself to be acted upon. Therefore, power is not always repressive. It can take a certain number of forms. And it is possible to have relations of power that are open.” (Foucault 1980).

In the account above, third party intervention is needed in instances where a woman felt powerless to change her husband’s behaviour. The decision to involve mediators in the conflict management needs to be understood as being manufactured by the intertwinement of culture, race and the patriarchal system. Black marriages in South Africa are an intricate affair with cultural, economic and social dimensions that are interconnected and cannot be divorced (Spaumer 2017). Additionally, in African communities’, marriage unifies both couples and the clans of both parties (Spaumer 2017). Moreover, the principles that are upheld by these African communities are collectivism and ubuntu.

In alignment with Ubuntu principles of conflict management, the tenets of reconciliation and inclusivity are significant (Malunga 2006). Furthermore, the chief purpose of all conflict mediation is relationship restoration (Malunga 2006). As such, considering the above-mentioned points collectively implies that African families (extended family) regard the maintenance of families, childcare, and upholding of traditions as a collaborative responsibility of the entire family (Spaumer 2017). Thus, Qhawekazi’s decision to involve family in conflict resolution draws from principles of collectivism.

To add on, the Black family in South Africa is patriarchal as men are considered as heads of the family and women are subjugated to their dominance (Ngubane 2010). Considering the latter, Qhawekazi cannot influence her partner to stop drinking, cheating and abusing because of the power he has over her. Therefore, to get this desired change she has to seek help from the family and the police. In Black culture, children are raised to respect their elders therefore in conformity to such teachings her husband succumbs to the orders of his parents; his parents due to age have more

power over him than his wife (Spaumer 2017). Even though this may have been a remedy for Qhawekazi, it does not apply to all Black families. Involving family members in some cases does little to stop the abuse from re-occurring. Furthermore, the police can also control her spouse's behaviour in situations of abuse because of the legal power they hold. Power dynamics are also inherent in conflict resolution strategies.

5.7 Conclusion

Marital Conflict occurs because of a variety of situations namely: failure to uphold traditional gender roles, fulfilling the provider role, decision-making power, work-life balance, male alcohol abuse, verbal abuse and infidelity. In a socio-political space whereby, women are empowered through their education and flourishing careers, marital conflict is interpreted as a power struggle between the sexes.

In closing, I maintain that marital conflict occurs because of unfulfilled gender role expectations and through men seeking to sustain and maintain their power when threatened. For men that were unemployed the contestations centred on fighting to maintain power despite being economically dependent on their spouses. Therefore, this shows that money is important for the equalising of power relations because the threat of losing power for men yields to them fighting to keep the power and if there is female resistance then marital conflict is born. On the other polar, a woman that does not care for her family's domestic care needs to levels expected by her husband is confronted with conflict.

Throughout the discussion, it was seen that men seek to maintain their masculinity and they do this by engaging in negative masculine gender roles such as heavy drinking, promiscuous behaviour and aggression. The occurrence and enactment of these gender roles contribute to conflict. Lastly, it was observed that various forms of abuses that is alcohol abuse, verbal abuse and financial abuse are exercised by men. To a great deal, this not only contributes to marital disharmony but results in female oppression. Therefore, marital conflict occurs in spaces of gender role disruption and power contestations between men and women.

6 Conclusion

“The end of a matter is better than its beginning...” (Ecclesiastes 7:8, NIV)

6.1 Introduction

The study is the first of its kind to examine Black middle-class women’s lived experiences of marital conflict and intimacy simultaneously, using a narrative approach and Intersectional framework to guide the inquiry. The study illuminates that the experiences of Black middle-classness, marital conflict and intimacy are influenced by intersecting social factors and power structures that produce livelihoods of oppression for some and livelihoods of privilege for others. This chapter provides a summary of the thesis, restates the main findings of the study and ends with recommendations for future studies.

6.2 Methodological Insights

The study used the qualitative narrative approach. Eight narrative interviews were collected and analysed (Berger et al. 2005). Purposive sampling was used and the participants were recruited via the snowballing technique. The participants were required to fit the following profile: be Black, self-identify as middle-class, in heterosexual marriages and or divorced, residing in Gauteng and have watched the Tyler Perry movie *Why Did I get Married?* The tools that were used for data collection were: a narrative interview guide, an audio recorder and notes kept in a journal. The interviews were done in the homes of the participants and only one was done at the participant’s workplace. Narrative data analysis consisted of the following processes: transcription, structural and content analysis. The narrative approach was useful because it helped me understand subjective conceptions of class and marital conflict and intimacy holistically.

6.3 Insights from the Literature Review

6.3.1 Black Middle-Class

The literature review discussed the following key topics; Black middle-classness, marital conflict and intimacy. Previous studies have indicated multiple approaches for studying the Black middle-class namely the occupational skills measure, vulnerability indicator and income approach (Burger et al. 2015). Moreover, various subjective definitions from previous studies were provided. From that exposition it was argued that Black middle-classness has varied meanings (Phadi et al. 2011). The conclusion was that Black middle-classness is heterogeneously experienced (Khunou 2015) and this study's findings matched this conclusion as multiple-definitions were also provided by the participants of this study.

The discussion on the literature review then provided geo-political and socio-economic factors that have contributed to the creation and maintenance of the Black middle-class in South Africa. Within that discussion, it was shown that embedded within a history of colonisation and its establishment of missionary education there was a formation of an African bourgeoisie (Southall 2016). The reception of the education enabled the Black middle-class to occupy professional jobs (Makotsho 2009). Finally, it was shown that the Black Middle-class today are preserved through political reform policies that were introduced post 1994 such as Black Economic Empowerment and Affirmative Action.

The challenge faced by the Black middle-class identified is high debt and low savings (Cronje et al. 2010). The above-mentioned challenges have also contributed to the precarious nature of the position (Khunou 2015). The findings of this study also spoke to the uncertain nature of the position experienced by those occupying the category of middle-class.

6.3.2 Marital Conflict

The review showed that various situations can contribute to marital conflict. Firstly, it shows that couples emerging from different social backgrounds have been socialised to develop particular tastes and preferences of that class (Streib 2013). The section then moved on to arguing that financial matters are a great source of conflict in intimate relationships. Next, it was shown that professional women struggling with work-life balance also experience conflict at home for not giving their partners sufficient attention and time (Kalliath et al. 2011). Another situation leading to marital conflict is

religious differences (Radebe 1983). The last factor identified of marital conflict in the review was increased male alcohol consumption. The section on marital conflict ended by identifying responses and resolution strategies to conflict. Negative responses to conflict are shouting, screaming and rage filled arguments (Gottman 1991). A positive response was open and honest communication about the matter (Gottman 1991; Gottman 1994). The resolution strategies that help solve the problem were collaboration, negotiation and talking calmly about matters (Jenkins et al. 2002).

6.3.3 Intimacy

The review addressed the implications of marital conflict on Intimacy. The dimensions of intimacy focused on were physical, care-giving, discursive, and self-disclosure. Findings from Gaia (2002) suggest that for some couples, the occurrence of intimate relationship conflict makes them withdraw from displaying physical expressions of affection and thus contributing to a weakening of physical intimacy. In a similar fashion research has shown that marital conflict creates disharmony in communication (Dew 2011; Khunou 2012). Disharmony is created during competitive argumentation because each partner is concerned with articulating their view and loses interest towards the other's need and it is in that process that discursive intimacy decreases (Gottman 1994).

6.4 Insights on the Findings

6.4.1 Black Middle-Classness

The findings of this study show that Black middle-classness is heterogeneously lived, understood and experienced. Three distinct experiences emerged in connection to affordability. The first experience comprised of some participants experiencing socio-economic hardship, the second experience consisted of those that explain their existence as being average and the third group experienced a life of privilege. The reason for these differential experiences is a result of different histories, varied incomes, number of income sources, socio-economic status of family of orientation and the level of education of the couple.

Furthermore, the findings showed that some of the Black middle-class women that participated in this study aim for class advancement. Such class advancement was

perceived to be achieved through: education, ownership of houses in urban residences and through material acquisition.

Chapter four also showed that once financially empowered some of the participants of this study preferred to relocate from the townships to spaces that were historically reserved for Whites in Apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, a move away from the townships was also interpreted as both an indicator of deliverance from Black struggle and oppression and a manifestation of the privilege and power of the Black middle-class. Chapter four overall showed that because different people emerge from different contexts and therefore have different life stories their conceptions of Black middle-classness are determined by their experiences and realities.

6.4.2 Narratives on Marital Conflict and Intimacy

Chapter five showed that male unemployment yields marital conflict and threatens traditional ideas of masculinity. It was learnt that the attempt of a man to preserve power amid disempowered contexts such as unemployment leads to conflict. Thus, affirming the argument that conflict in marriage is a result of power struggles between men and women. Furthermore, it became apparent that marital conflict emerges when men attempt to maintain the dominant family head role despite being financially disempowered and the women resists such dominance. This decision-making power that men hold was argued to be reinforced by structural systems such as religious institution, patriarchy and Black cultural practices. The marital relationship and particularly marital conflict were again shown to be embedded within power dynamics and this was explained through Michael Foucault's view that power relations create a space for the possibility of resistance.

The study also showed that the inability of women to uphold the conventional gender role expectation of being homemaker and prioritising family expansion and nurturing goals over professional and educational goals leads to conflict in marriage. Following that, it was unveiled that the devastating consequence of female economic dependency on males produces conflict and oppression of the women. Next, it was demonstrated that various forms of male behaviours and abuse emerge when women are not economically empowered. These behaviours include cheating and emotional abuse.

Overall, pertaining to responses to marital conflict, the study showed that these responses are shaped by feminine socialisation and gender norm behaviour. For example, tears and empathetic feelings emerged as a response to marital conflict for some of the women. This finding matched the body of knowledge that maintains that women are relationship orientated often known to display powerless emotions such as sadness, shame and crying, whilst men display strong emotions in conflict episodes (Duck 1993). An effective conflict resolution strategy mentioned was to eradicate the source of the problem. The participants of the study solved their conflicts by silence, forgiving, yielding or involving family. The response and resolution of conflict again showed the impact of female gender socialisation in conflict management strategies. Such socialisation often produces females that are relationship orientated and are peace-makers and males that are competitive, dominant and argumentative (Duck 1993).

It was also shown that marital conflict had no effect on physical intimacy, and care-giving aspects of intimacy. However, marital conflict was shown to have adverse effects on communication between spouses thereby altering discursive intimacy. Therefore, in addressing the question of how intimacy is experienced in spaces of conflict is that physical and care-giving dimensions of intimacy remained unaltered. However, emotional intimacy and discursive intimacy was altered and this is because conflict is a behaviour that induces heightened emotional responses therefore, emotional states change during conflict situations.

6.4.3 Why Did I Get Married?

The findings revealed that South African Black middle-class couples from this study experienced similar marital conflicts as those espoused by Perry's (2007) film. For example, in the film Angela and Marcus experienced marital conflict because of unemployment and alcohol abuse. In this study it was found that two of the participants identified with Angela and Marcus because of the husband's unemployment and because a spouse was abusing alcohol (note that contrary to the film in this study it was the husband abusing alcohol and not a woman as in the film). Again, participants identified with the character of Terry and Dianne when their husbands were not supporting them in advancing their career goals. Lastly, a couple that was identified

with was that of Sheila and Mike whereby a participant stated during times of financial dependency that she suffered emotional abuse and being subjected to her husband's tendencies of infidelity.

Overall pertaining to the comparison of marital challenges *Why Did I Get Married?* It is observed that the marital conflicts experienced in the movie are similar to those of the participants. Therefore, this suggests that the inability to fulfil gender roles, emotional abuse, spousal alcohol abuse, male unemployment and infidelity are marital problems that are shared across continents and are not phenomena only occurring in the South African context. With regards to identifying the situations that trigger conflict the root cause in all the conflicts was embedded in power dynamics, whereby men attempt to preserve authority over women and financially and educationally empowered women were resisting such power.

6.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies can expand the narrative inquiry to examine the lived experiences of Black middle-class same-sex couples and those residing in rural areas. Each of those samples would be exclusive and aim to categories of influence such as gender and environmental context, thus providing a plateau of knowledge for researchers and Sociologists seeking to understand Black middle-class experiences of conflict and intimacy within the marriage institution.

In addition, future studies on the topic can consider interviewing both men and women so as to account for the experiences of middle-classness, conflict and intimacy for men as well. Doing so will also allow for a deeper comprehension of the study from a male and female perspective. This type of sample also allows for gender comparisons to be made.

Lastly, future studies can consider employing a quantitative methodology, in investigating the factors that contribute to marital conflict so as to consider the most dominant factors that contribute to the phenomena and to what extent the conflict occurs.

6.6 Conclusion

The differential experience and understandings of Black middle-classness is caused by differences in history, socio-economic status, dual income versus single-income households, the number of dependents and the number of income avenues a household possesses. These variables intersect to form heterogeneous experiences of Black middle-classness. This therefore, implies that researchers, policy analysts and scholars that seek to understand Black middle-class livelihoods need to include historical analysis, socio-economic position and biographical factors concurrently in examining this understudied population for a holistic understanding.

Moreover, the finding that some conceive of Black middle-classness as a precarious position to occupy because of financial depravity that echoes the working class suggests that Black middle-classness is an illusory concept that is susceptible to shifts and changes. This then further implies that those belonging to it are vulnerable to declining in class position. This finding then highlights a need for more policies, projects and initiatives to promote entrepreneurship, business ventures and means for Black middle-class South Africans to possess wealth generating assets so as to create more income streams that will move the middle-class away from being salary dependent and living pay check to pay check.

Middle-class maintenance was preserved through further education and the pursuit of post graduate qualifications. This however, came with implications for marriage and family life. These implications comprise of *work-study-life* balance conflict and inevitably marital conflict because of spousal (husbands) perception of the family care and domestic responsibilities being neglected.

I am of the considered view that both the phenomena of work-life balance conflict and marital conflict exist because of the belief held by both men and women that women are responsible for all family care, domestic household work and child rearing roles.

However, with more women in pursuit of professional careers and higher education, family gender roles need to be revised and rethought to fit the scope of family life with both marital partners working beyond the domestic space. The re-writing or rethinking of these roles needs to be initiated through both primary and secondary socialisation channels. Whereby, both the girl and boy child are raised to assume all types of work. So, for example cooking, cleaning, laundry and gardening is the responsibility of both the girl and the boy child. And similarly, both should be taught to provide for the family.

I believe that through such teaching's boys will be raised to be men and husbands that take equal responsibility to that of women in the domain of household work and family care responsibility. Once domestic work becomes the responsibility of both men and women, the blame game is likely to reduce and thus the conflicts emanating from the two is likely to reduce.

Marital conflict was similarly, mainly attributed to the failure to meet the expectations of traditional gender role expectations. Therefore, the above suggestion of re-thinking gender roles still applies here. In order to break away from dominant frameworks pertaining to gender roles, it means that they need to be deconstructed from their place of origin and in this case gender roles originate from home.

Strongly entrenched beliefs, regarding gender roles which later transmute into expectations, get engineered from who does what work/chore at home. Traditionally in Black South African homes, domestic work was done by women. Whilst the men did garden, home repairs and maintenance work. Therefore, the children in these homes observed this gendered nature of work in heterosexual marriages. They then transfer these values and expectations in their own marriages.

Conflict then occurs when their spouses do not uphold these traditional gender roles. Thus, a new form of social engineering needs to take place where both the girl and boy child are taught to change the light bulb, mow the lawn and fix the broken tap. And again, both the girl and boy child need to be taught how to baby sit, make lunch boxes, and do laundry.

In so doing, in adulthood they can become husbands and wives that have been trained to do all kinds of work both in the domestic space and outside the domestic space. I believe this will create marriages of gender equality and partnership reigning as the order of marital life. This would then create homes with less or better gender role expectations and therefore a possible reduction of conflicts that emanate from such expectations.

Lastly, marital conflict altered experiences of intimacy for some and for others intimacy remained unaltered. The dimension of intimacy which was mostly affected by conflict is discursive intimacy, which is communication between husband and wife. In this study, the wife made a resolution to remain silent with unresolved issues than possibly undergo physical abuse in the articulation of her views. This means that both men and

women need to be trained to communicate with one another in conflict spaces without the threat of reaching violent states. Such training would reduce gender- based violence in South African households. Future studies can therefore consider tracing the root causes of these violent reactions of men during conflict situations and thereafter, investigate prevention and resolution strategies to domestic conflict.

.



Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Auckland Park Kingsway Campus

Corner of Kingsway and University Roads

Auckland Park, Johannesburg

Tel: 011 559 2633

Title of project: Examining Black Middle Class: Marital Conflict and Intimacy

Name of researcher: Puleng Hlanyane

This form is to clarify that I have read and understood the attached information sheet giving details of the project which have been explained to me Puleng Hlanyane. I have also been given the opportunity to ask Puleng Hlanyane any questions that I have about and my involvement in it, and I understand my role in the project. My decision to consent is entirely voluntarily and I understand that I am free to withdraw at any stage of the project without giving reason. Furthermore, it has been clearly explained that I will not receive any incentives for participating in this particular research project. I understand that data gathered in this project may form the basis of a report or any other form of publication or presentation. In addition, I understand that this research study is for academic purposes only and only authorized personnel (supervisor) will have access to information. Lastly, I understand that my name will not be used in any report, publication, and that every effort will be made to safeguard my identity and confidentiality is ensured.

Participant's signature:

Researchers signature:

Participants name:

Researchers name:

Date:

Date:

Appendix B

Participant Information Sheet

Dear: Prospective Participant

Topic of the research: Examining Experiences of Marital Conflict and Intimacy among black middle-class women

My name is Puleng Hlanyane and I am a Masters Sociology student at the University of Johannesburg. As part of the requirement for the degree I am conducting research seeking to examine the experiences of Black middle-class, its influence on marital conflict, and the implications this has on intimacy, the aspects of intimacy that will be investigated are emotional closeness, trust, cohesion and self-disclosure between husband and wife from the perspective of women. Therefore, I would like you to participate in my study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and thus refusal to participate will not be held against you in anyway. If you agree to take part, the time and place will be negotiated.

Before you decide to take part in the study it is important that you understand what the research is for, and what you will be asked to do. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep. You will also be asked to sign a consent form. You can change your mind anytime and withdraw from the study without giving a reason. The purpose of this study is to examine your experiences in terms of being a Black woman who is in a heterosexual relationship and identifies as Black middle class.

I would like to ask questions about what it is like for you, your situations, household conditions, community surrounding you and also people who are connected with your experience. The interview will be held at the participant's home. The interviews that will be on tape will later be transcribed. With your permission the interview will be recorded. No other person than my supervisor will have access to the tapes. The tapes and interview schedule will be kept in a safe place following any publications emanating from the study. Please be assured that your personal name and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final research report. No research participant will be identifiable from any of the

publications. For further enquiries about the research study feel free to contact me at 201241800@student.uj.ac.za and 076-525-4596. Alternatively, you can contact my supervisor Professor Grace Khunou at 011 559 3346 or via email at gracek@uj.ac.za.

Thank you in anticipation



Appendix C

Narrative Interview Guide

Black Middle Class and Intimacy A Sociological Inquiry:

Examining Black Middle-Class Women's Experiences of Marital Conflict and Intimacy

Section A: Demographic Questionnaire

- **AGE**

What is your age?.....

- **Gender**

- What is your gender?.....

- **RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP MEMBERSHIP**

- How would you describe your racial/ethnic group membership?

-

- **NATIVE TONGUE**

What is your primary language?

.....

What other languages do you speak?

-

- **PLACE OF BIRTH**

- Where were you born?.....

- **RELIGION**

- Are you affiliated with a faith-based organization (spiritual or religious)? If so please specify

- **NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND DEPENDENTS (IF APPLICABLE)**

- How many children do you have?.....

- How many dependents including your own children do you have?

- Own Children..... Other.....

- **EDUCATION COMPLETED**

What is your highest educational level?

Level of Education	Please specify
--------------------	----------------

Lower than Standard 6/Grade 8	
Standard 7-8/Grade 9-10	
Standard 9-10/ Grade 11-12	
Technical Diploma/College certificate	
University Degree	

• **EMPLOYMENT**

What work do you do?

•

• **INCOME RANGE**

How much do you earn?

Income	Specify
Up to R5 553	
R 5 554- R 10 009	
R 10 010- R18 5444	
R 18 545- R 44 948	
R 44 949 & above	

Which other sources of income do you have?

•

• **EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS**

Do you have a medical aid..... which one..... ?

What other benefits do you have at work?

- **RESIDENCE**

What type of residence do you live in?

Type of residence	Specify
House	Bond/Rental/own/Parent
Flat	Bond/Rental/Own/Parent
Other	

How many people are live in your household including you?

How many people living in your household work?

Where do you live?

- **HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES**

List your other household expenses:

Household expenses	Specify Monthly cost
DSTV	
Help/Domestic worker	
Gardener	
Communication: Landline/Cell	

Connection: Wifi/3g	
Bond/Rent	
Water and Electricity	
Medical Aid/Health	
Eating out	
Entertainment	
Education	
Food and Clothing	
Credit Card	
Overdraft Facility	
Transport/ Car payments	

MARRIAGE

How do you classify your marriage ?

Classification	Specify
Traditionally married	
Customary Union	
Married in Community of property	
Married out of Community of property (Anti nuptial contract)	

How long have you been married? Please tick one box

Age (in years)	Specify
0-1	
1-5	
5-10	
10-15	
15-20	
25-30	
35-40	
40 years and over	

Did your partner pay lobola ? Please tick the appropriate answer

YES	NO
-----	----

If yes what did you give?

Type of Bridal dowry	Specify (amount/quantity)
Money	
Live stock	
Both	
Other	

--	--

Have you watched the movie “Why did I get married?”

.....

- **PSEUDONYM**

Please provide me with a fake(first) name for purposes of protecting your identity:

.....

If you prefer that I assign you one instead, please check:

END OF SECTION A

**(WITH THE PARTICIPANTS PERMISSION ASK TO TURN-ON THE RECORDER
TO COMMENCE WITH SECTION B**

Narrative Interview guide

Section 1: Black Middle-Class Questions

1. Earlier you self-identified yourself as a middle-class please state what you mean by this?
2. What is your lifestyle like as a Black middle-class woman?

Section 2: Marital Conflict and Intimacy Questions

1. If you have watched the movie Why did I get married? Please indicate which of the couples from the movie why did I get married do you identify with the most. Tell me more about your selection (that is chosen couple) (see appendix D) for pictures
2. Every couple's marriage can be written as a story. I would like you to think about your marriage now as if you were writing a story. First think about the chapters of this story. I have here a page to help you in this task. First give your story/ book a title. Then write down how many years this stage lasted; you can even put in dates if you remember on the first column. Then go on to the next row and write a suitable title for this stage, you can think of this title as a name of a chapter I have filled in the first rows to give you an example. Please divide the story of your marriage into three stages, hence you will see there are three columns to be completed below.

Name of your story or book :

Stage	Dates &no of years	Title of Stage
1	1992-1995; 3 years	The beginning of happy days
2		
3		
4		

Now that you have completed the table please answer the same set of questions about marital conflict and intimacy for each stage of your marriage.

Stage 1

1. Tell me about a significant episode or memory of conflict that you remember from this stage.

1. What (did/do) you and your partner typically argue about?
2. How (did/do) you resolve the conflict?
3. How (did/do) you respond to the conflict?
4. How did you talk to your partner during this argument?
5. How did you talk to your partner after this argument?

Stage 2.....

1. What (did/do) you and your partner typically argue about?
2. How (did/do) you resolve the conflict?
3. How (did/do) you respond to the conflict?
4. Did you show care during that argument?
5. Did you show care after that argument?

Stage 2.....

6. What (did/do) you and your partner typically argue about?
7. How (did/do) you resolve the conflict?
8. How (did/do) you respond to the conflict?
9. How did you feel about your partner during that argument?
10. How do you feel about your partner following that argument?
11. Do you disclose private information during an argument?
12. Can you disclose private information after an argument?

End of Interview



Appendix D

Images from Tyler Perry's Why Did I get Married?

Couple 1: Sheila & Mike



Image of Sheila and Mike accessed on 27 October 2019 <https://www.truechristianity.info>

Couple 2: Dianne & Terry



Image of Dianne and Terry accessed on 27 October 2019 <https://www.amc.com>.

Couple 3: Angela & Marcus



Image of Angela and Marcus accessed on 27 October 2019 <https://www.blackfilm.com> .

Couple 4: Patricia & Devin



Image of Patricia and Gavin accessed on 27 October 2019 <https://www.tvsa.co.za>.

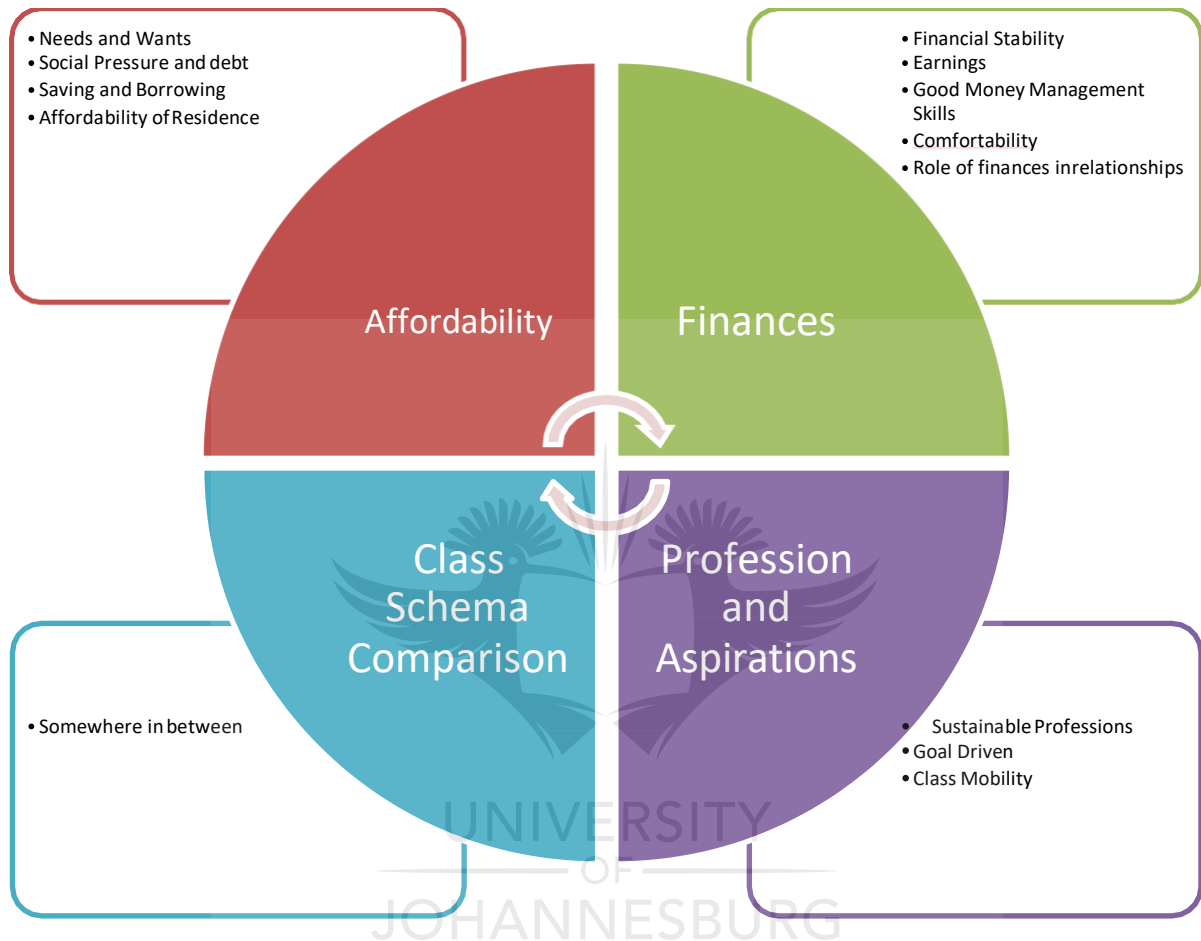


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Appendix E

Cycle Matrix Diagram

A Cycle Matrix Showing an Overview of the emerging themes for middle-classness.



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